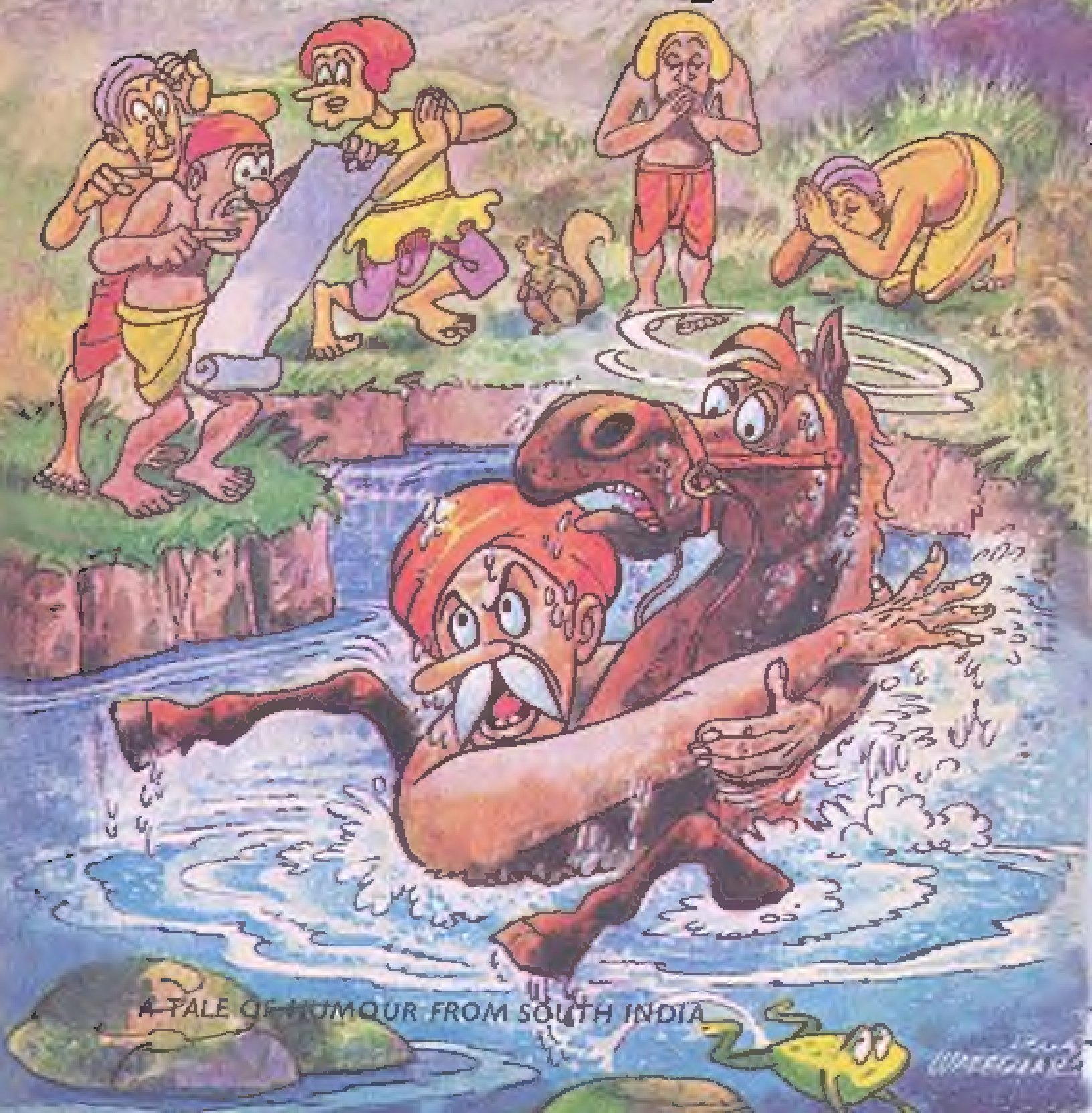




No 261

The Fool's Disciples



A TALE OF HUMOUR FROM SOUTH INDIA

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

This Chitra Katha is adapted from a Tamil book written by an Italian priest, Fr. C. J. Beschi. The book is one of the earliest prose works in the Tamil language.

Fr. Beschi, or Veeramamunivar as he was known, came to India in the 17th century and settled down in Madurai. He studied Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil and became proficient in all three languages.

Besides *Paramartha Guru* he has several other books to his credit. He also wrote the first dictionary in Tamil and a treatise on Tamil grammar.

Whatever might have been the intention of Fr. Beschi in writing these tales, over the years they gained increasing popularity in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. *The Guru* is known by the name *Paramananda* in Andhra Pradesh and as *Gampa Guru* in Karnataka. In Kannada several stories, skits and essays have been written with the *Gampa Guru* as the central character. In fact a distinct school of humour named *Gampa Sahitya* has come into being in Kannada.

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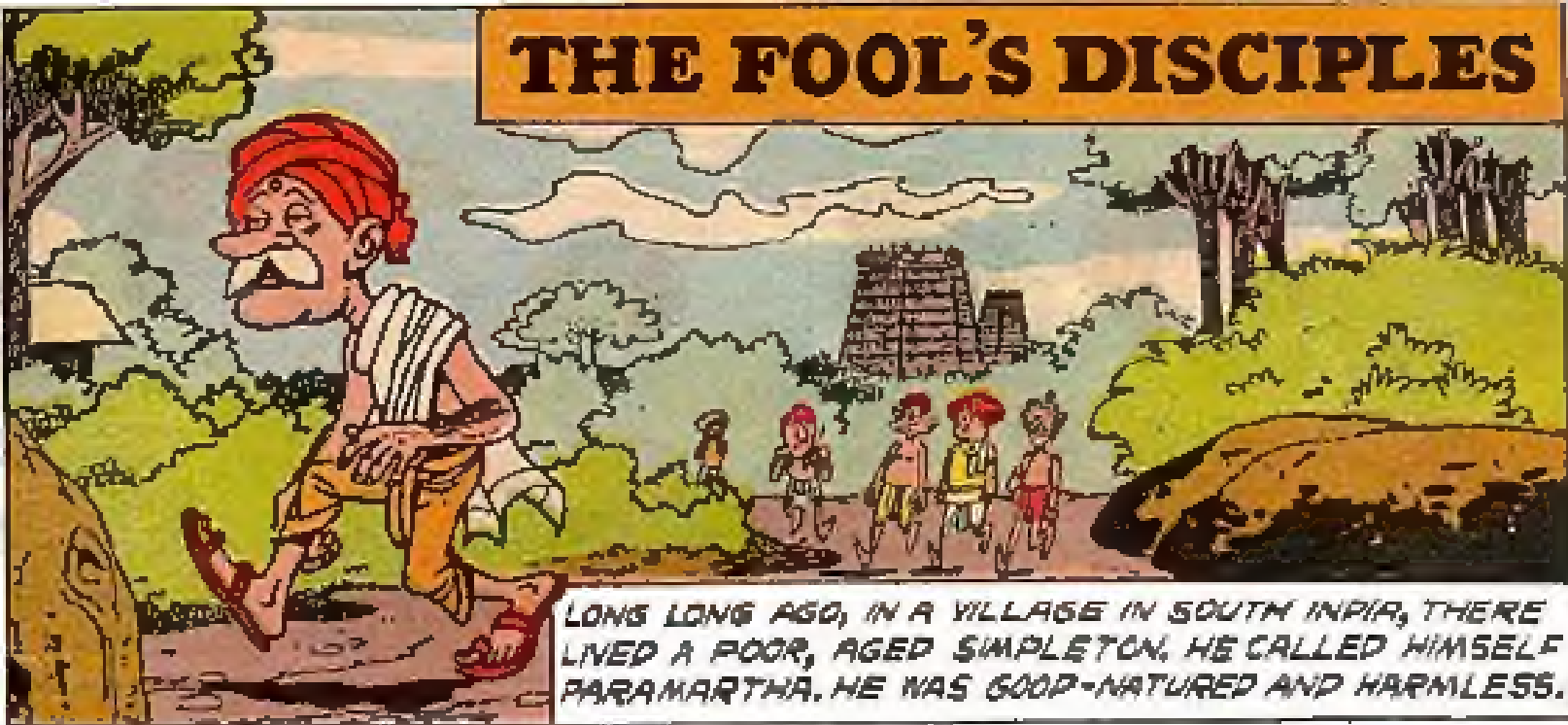
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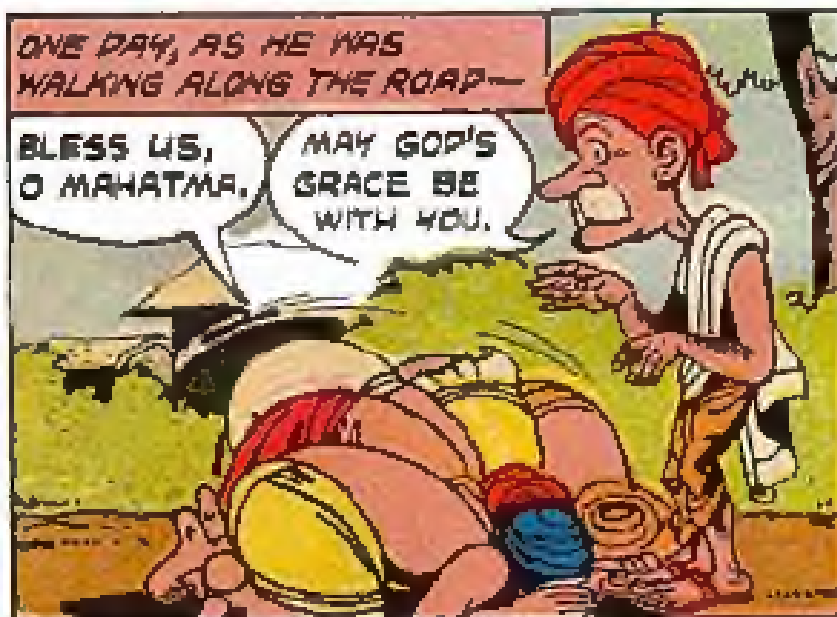
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THE FOOL'S DISCIPLES



LONG LONG AGO, IN A VILLAGE IN SOUTH INDIA, THERE LIVED A POOR, AGED SIMPLETON. HE CALLED HIMSELF PARAMARTHA. HE WAS GOOD-NATURED AND HARMLESS.



ONE DAY, AS HE WAS WALKING ALONG THE ROAD—

BLESS US, O MAHATMA.

MAY GOD'S GRACE BE WITH YOU.



YOU BLESSED US JUST ONCE THOUGH WE ARE FIVE. MAY I ASK FOR WHOM THE BLESSING WAS ?



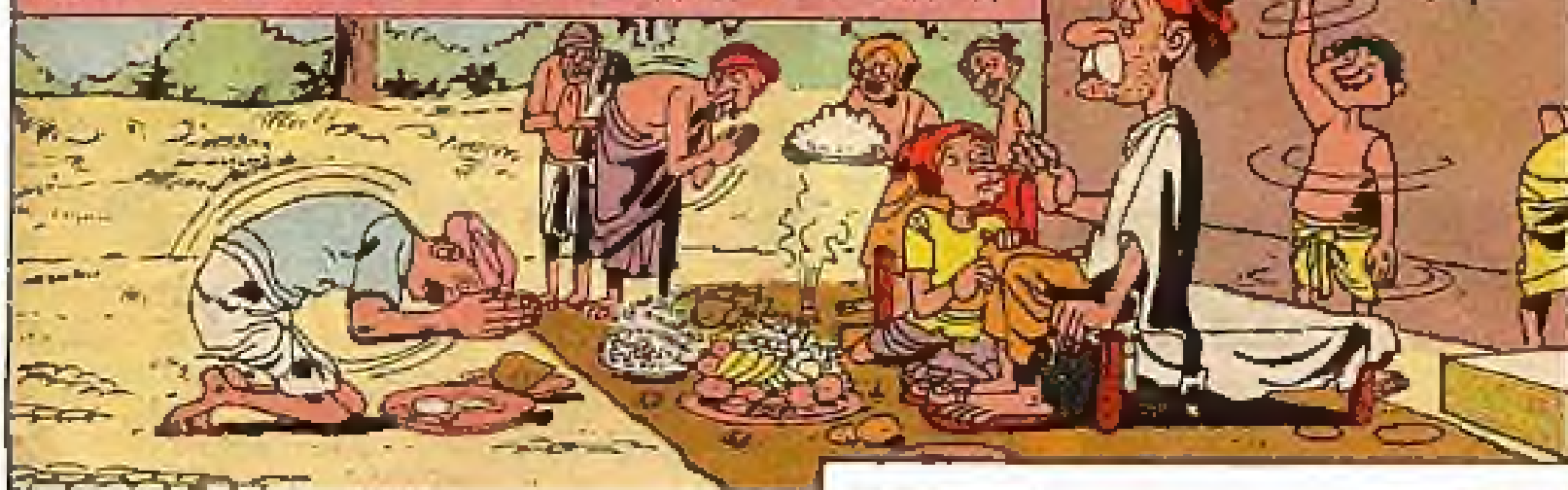
FOR ME, OF COURSE !

BUT I TOUCHED HIS FEET FIRST !

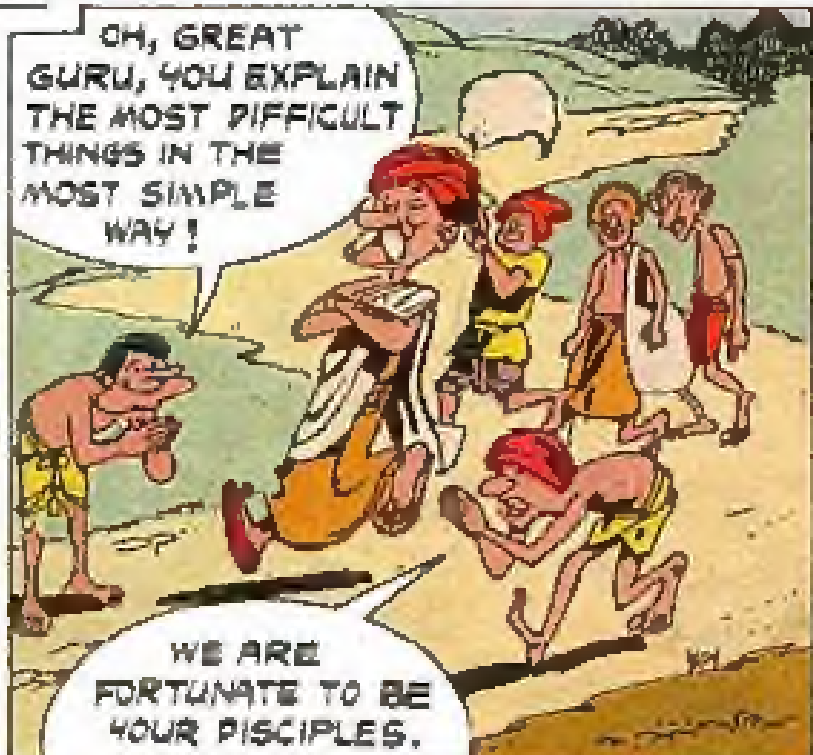
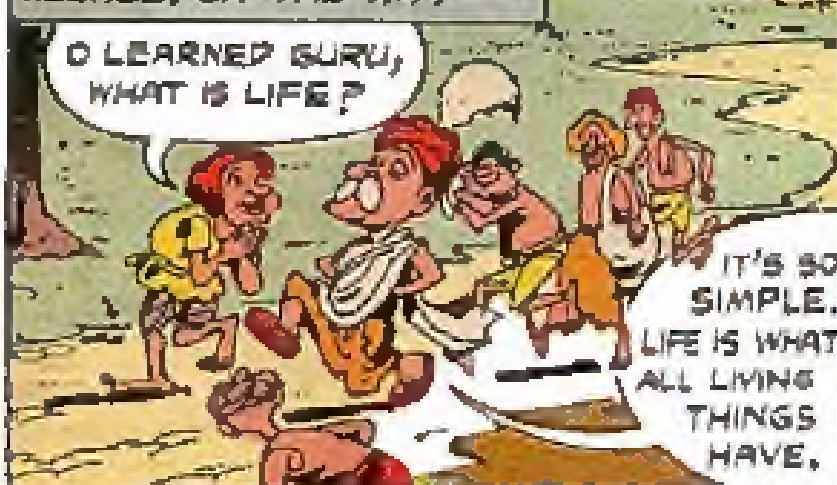
I WAS THE ONE, YOUR HAND WAS RIGHT ABOVE MY HEAD.



THUS, OVERNIGHT, PARAMARTHA, THE SIMPLETON, BECAME GURU PARAMARTHA. HE NAMED HIS FIVE FOOLISH DISCIPLES, MADDI, MADHAYA, MILECHA, MOODHA AND PEDDA. AND SINCE ALL GURUS AND THEIR DISCIPLES LIVE IN ASHRAMS, THE SIX OF THEM BUILT ONE AND STARTED LIVING IN IT.



ONE DAY, THE GURU AND HIS DISCIPLES SET OUT FOR A TEMPLE IN A NEIGHBOURING VILLAGE. ON THE WAY—



LATER IN THE EVENING, THE GURU AND HIS DISCIPLES HAD TO CROSS A RIVER.

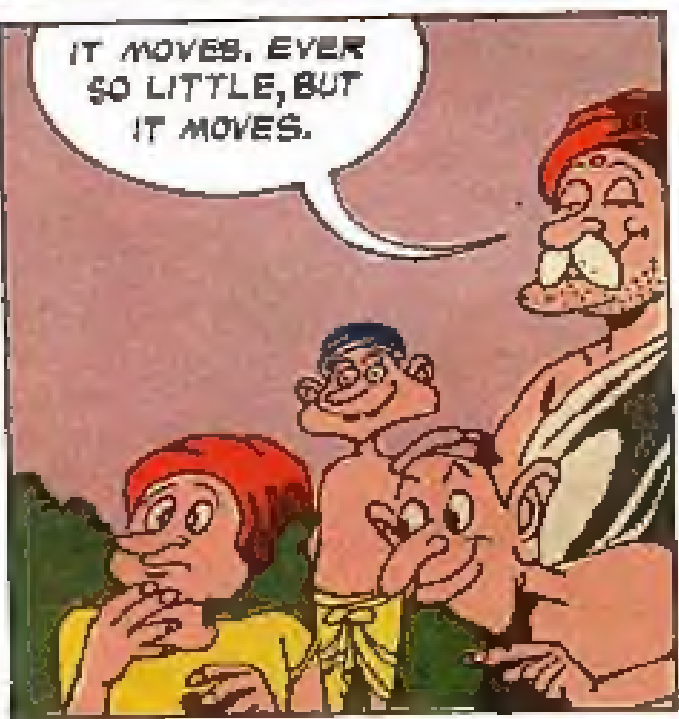


IS THIS RIVER A LIVING THING?

OF COURSE, CAN'T YOU SEE IT MOVING?

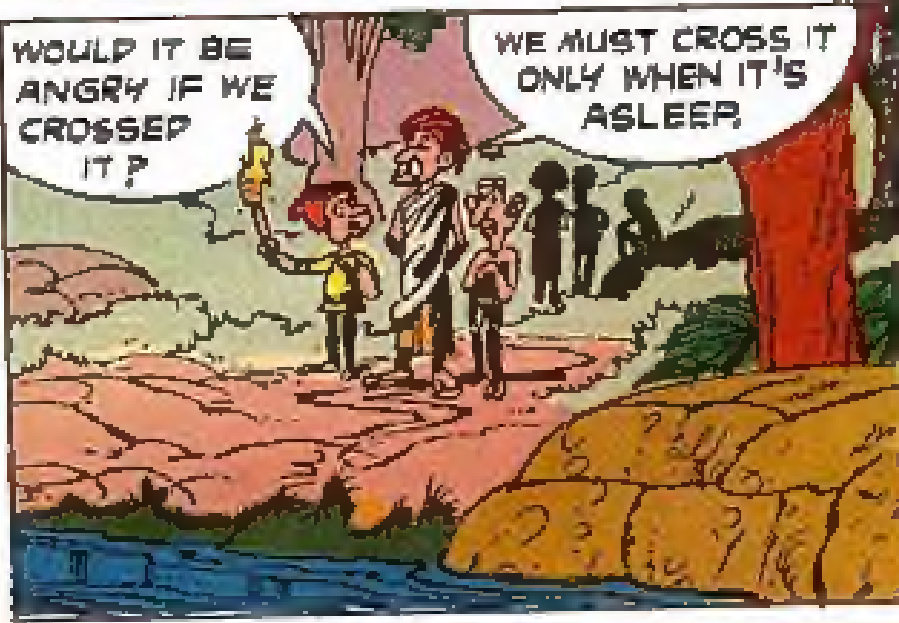


IT MOVES. EVER SO LITTLE, BUT IT MOVES.



WOULD IT BE ANGRY IF WE CROSSED IT?

WE MUST CROSS IT ONLY WHEN IT'S ASLEEP.



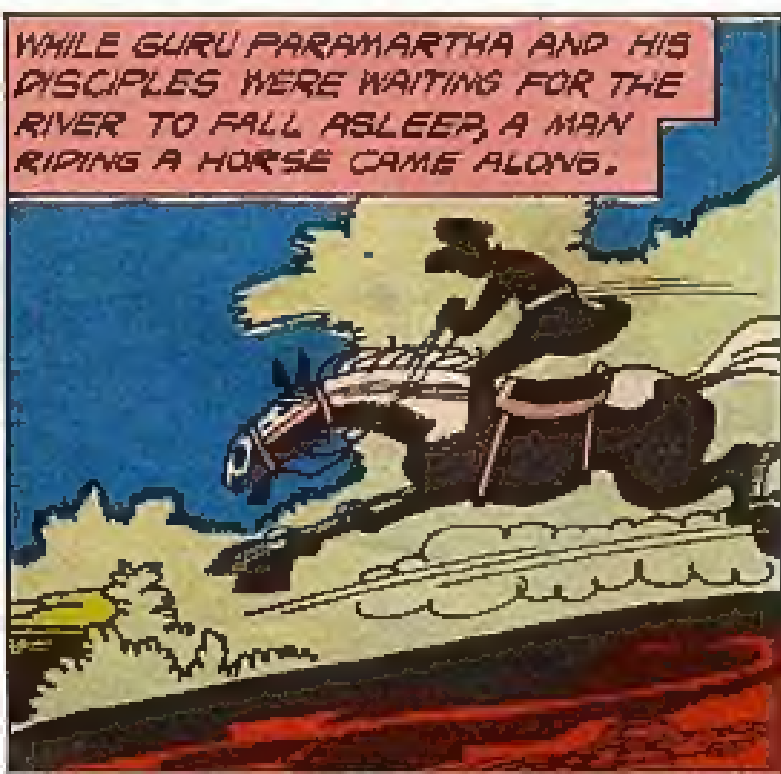
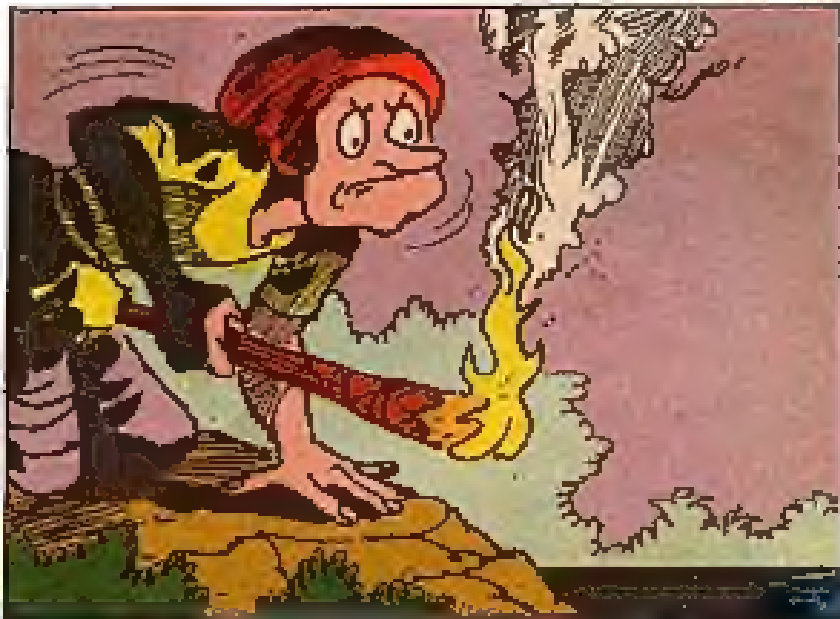
THEN I'LL GO AND SEE WHETHER IT'S ASLEEP.

WE'LL WAIT HERE FOR YOU.



I'LL PROD IT WITH MY TORCH.





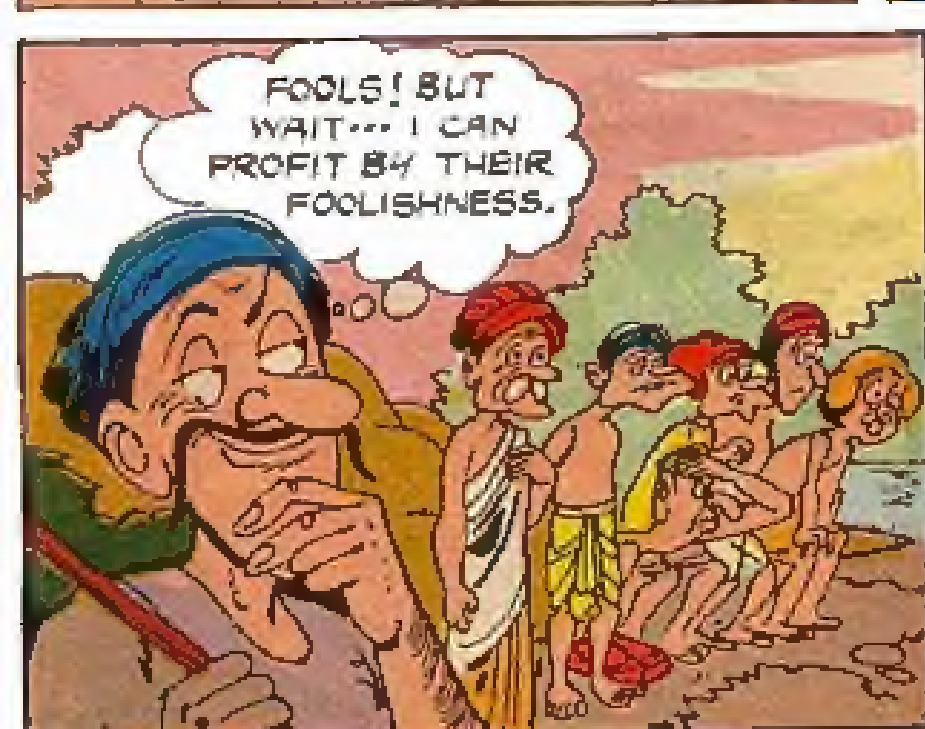
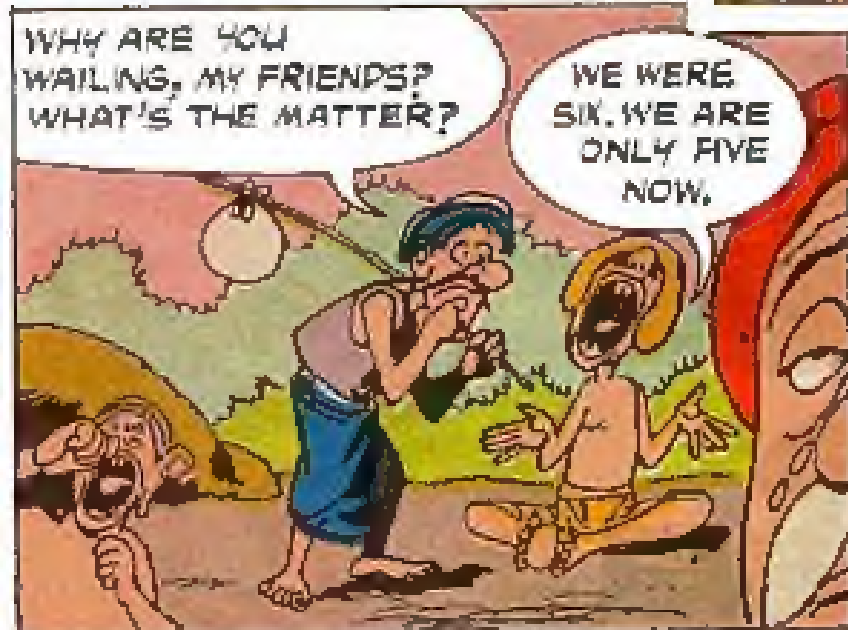
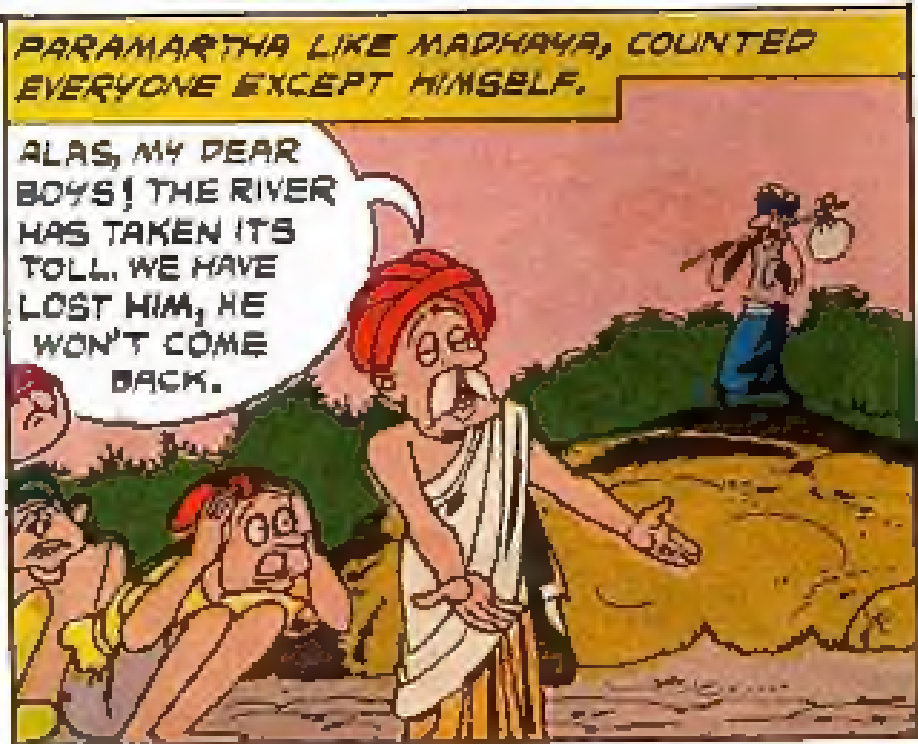


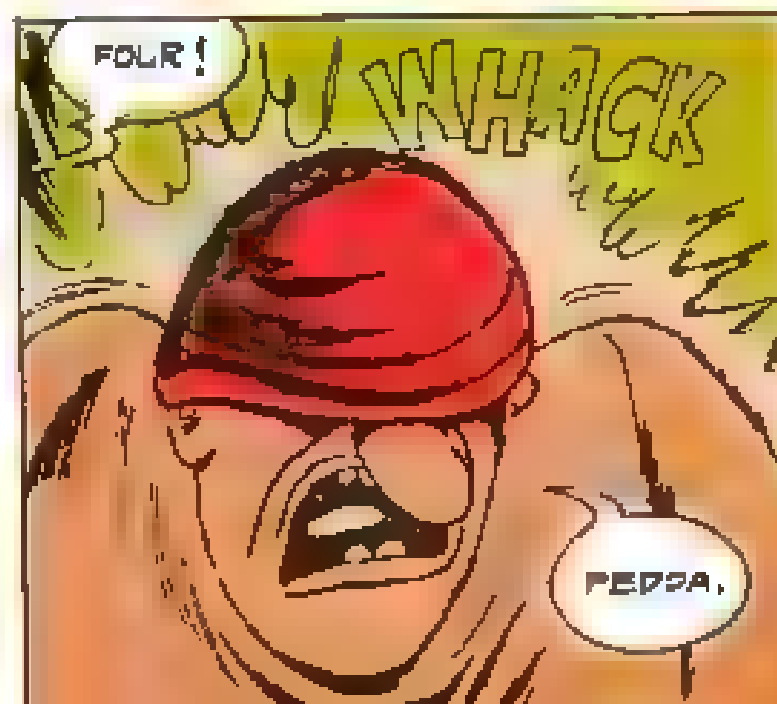
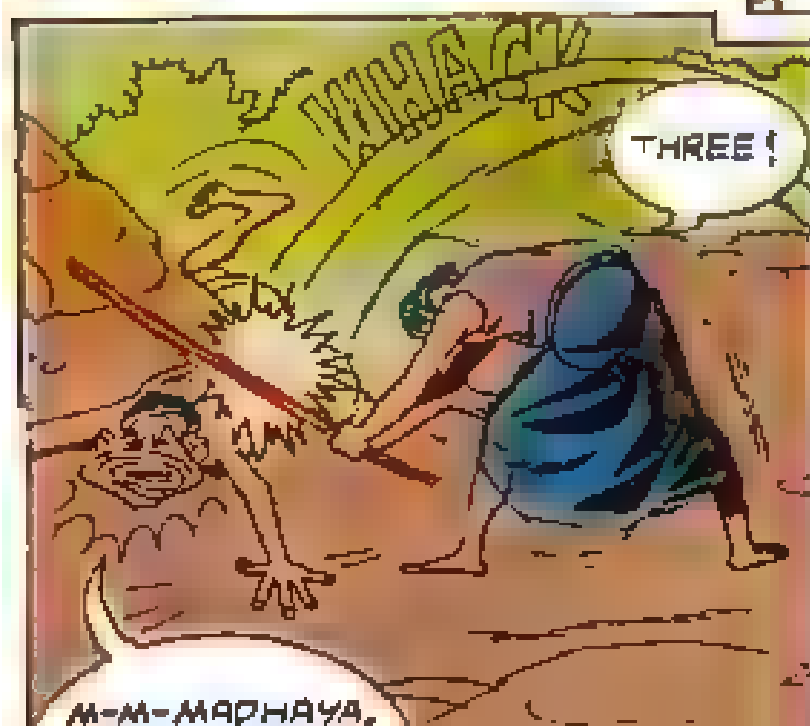
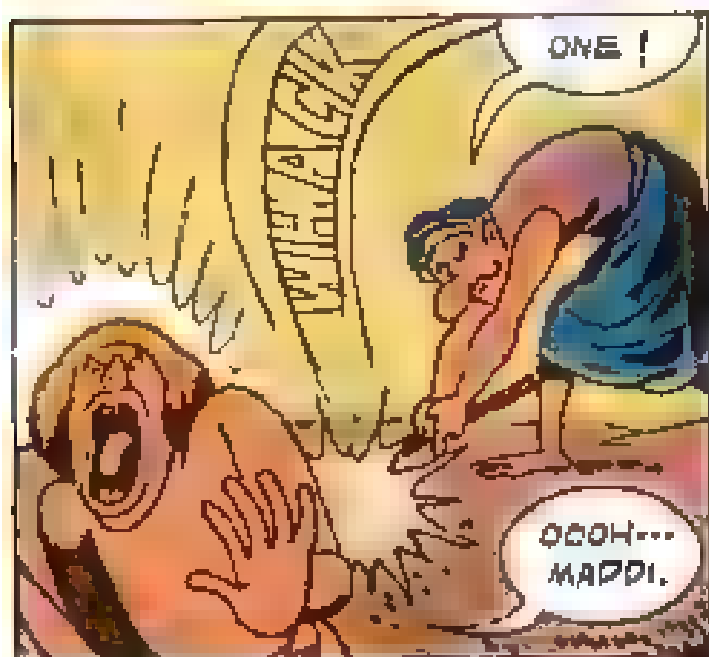
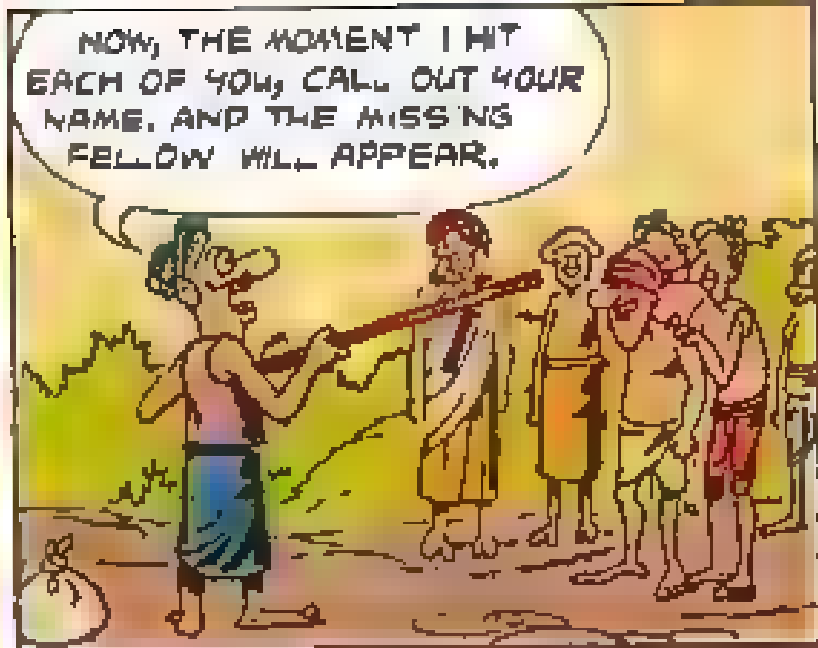
LATER, ON THE OPPOSITE BANK—

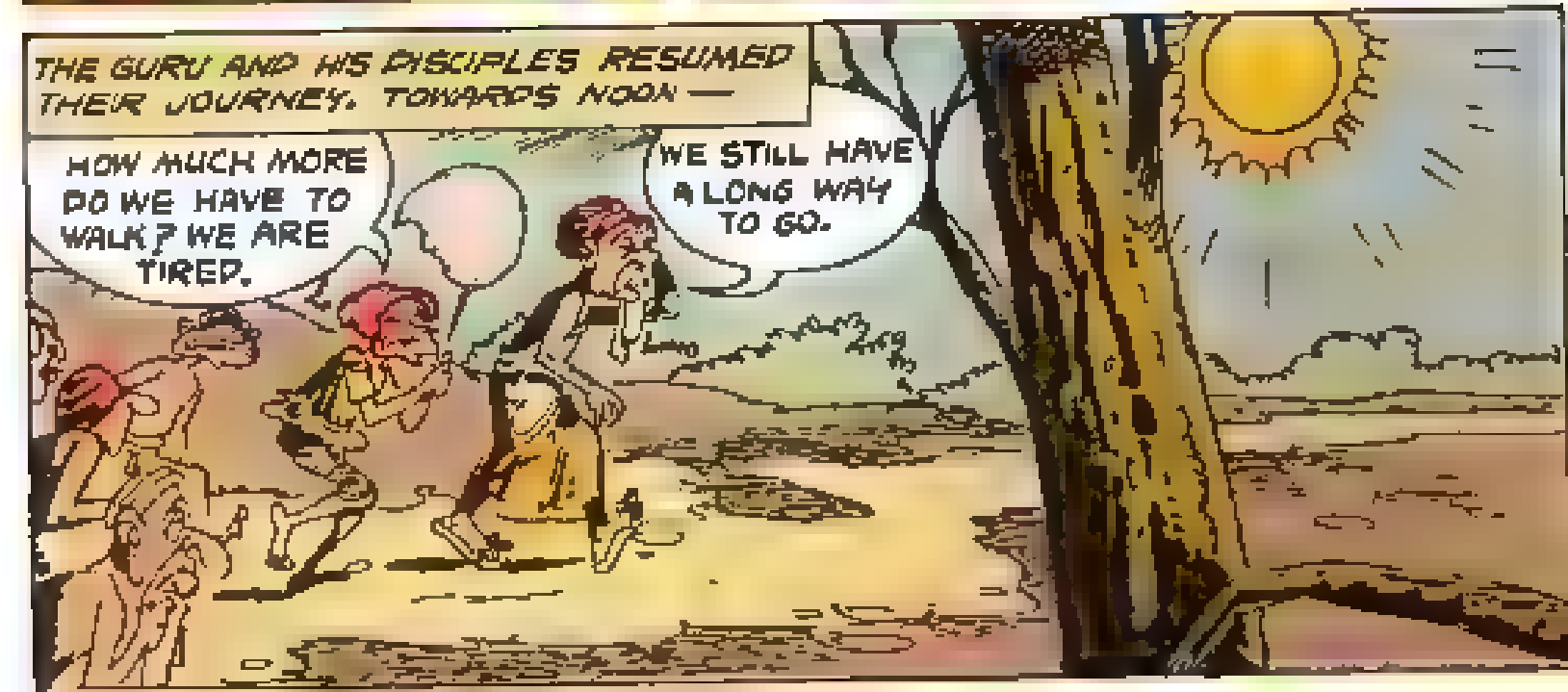
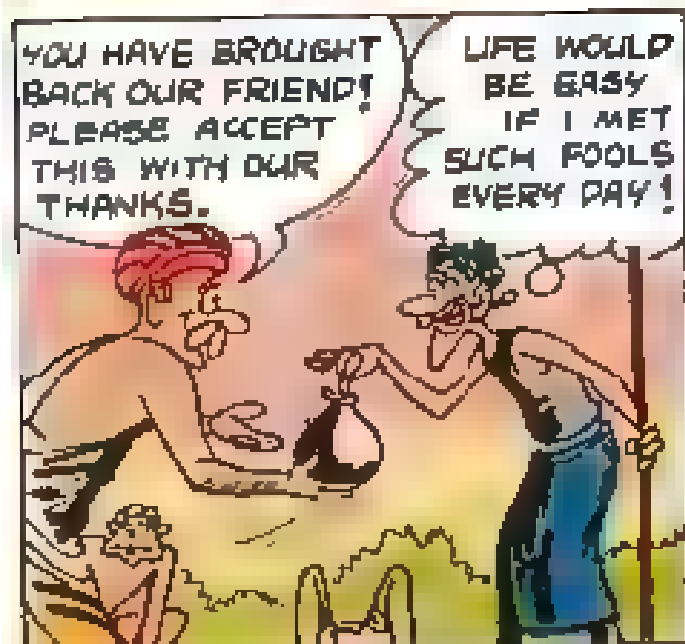
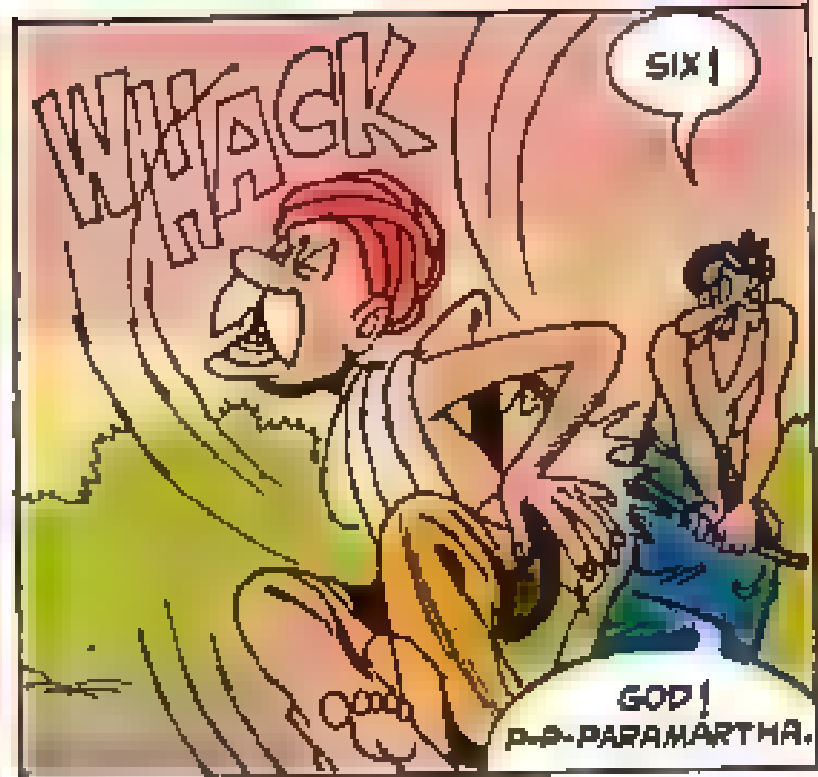


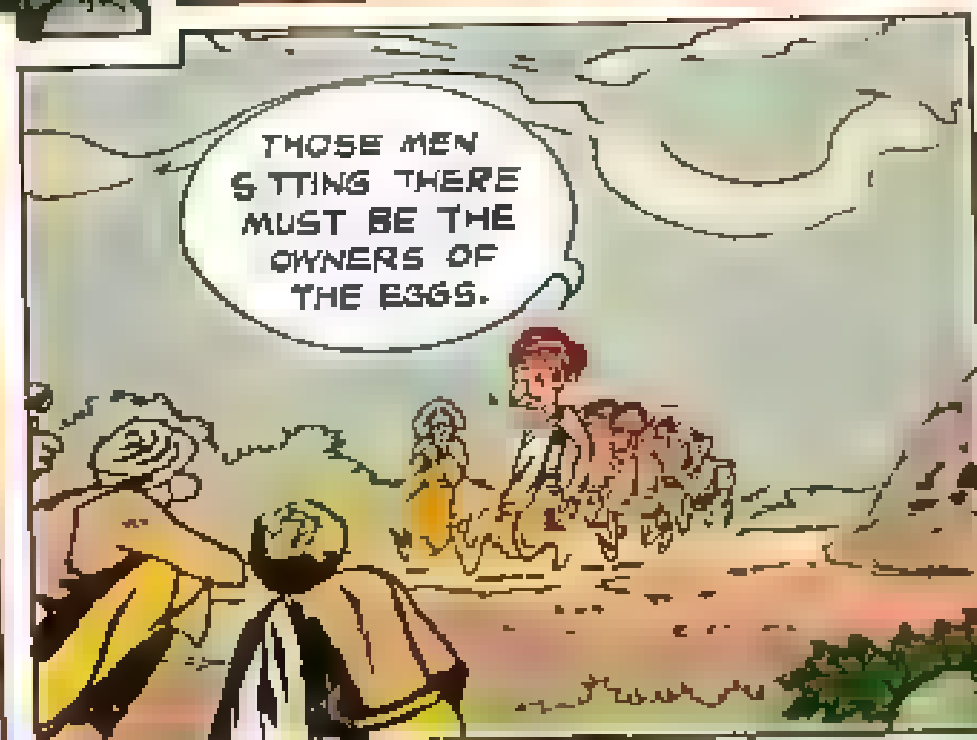
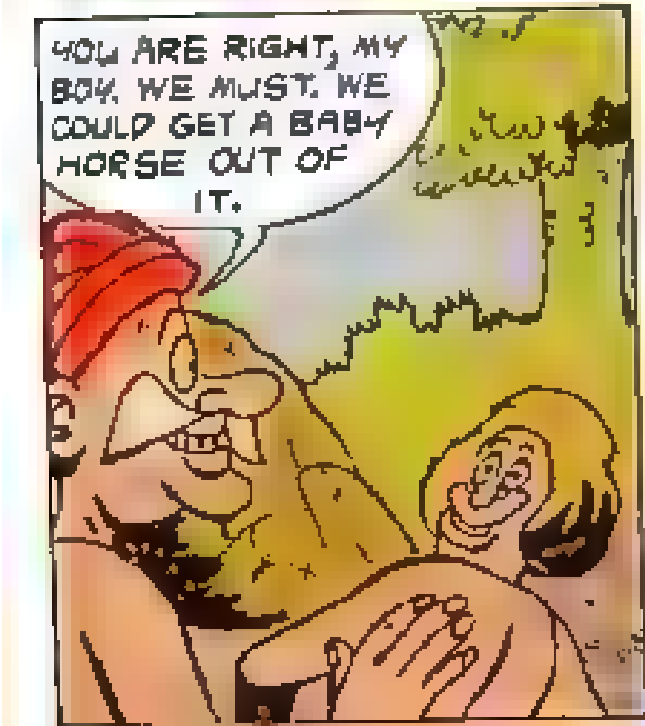
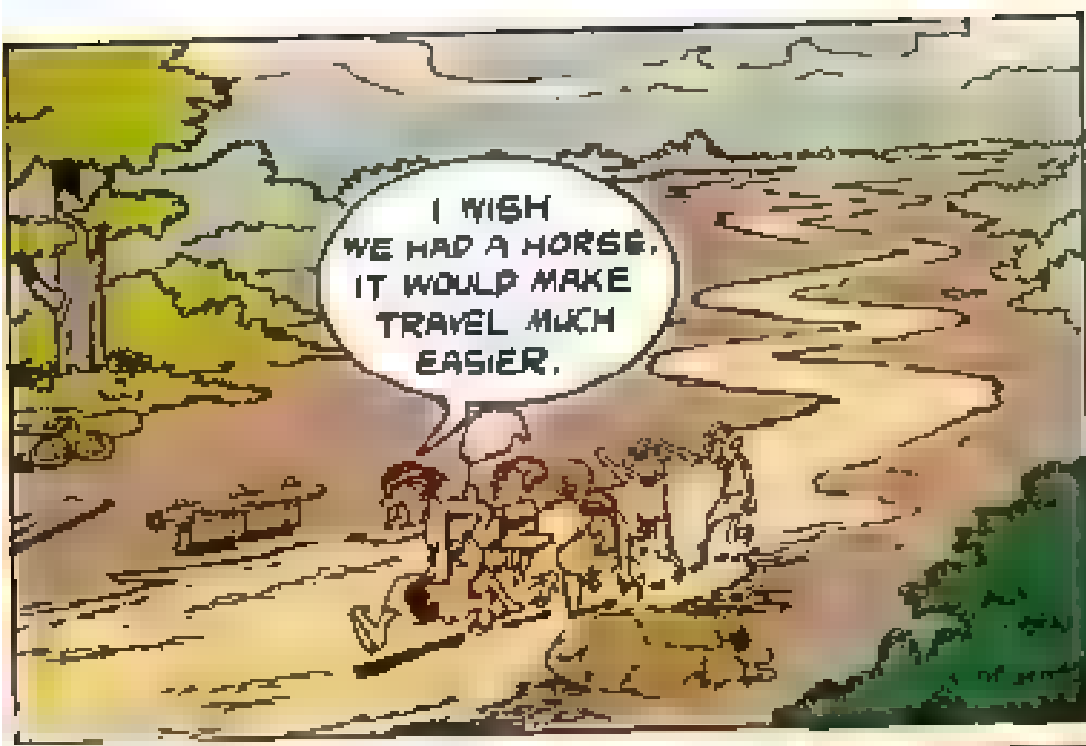
MADHAYA STARTED COUNTING.













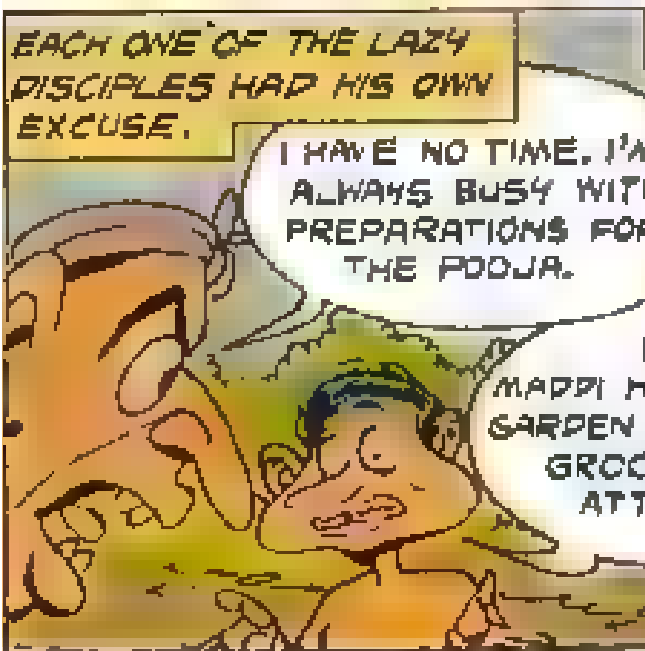


THAT WAS AN
EXCELLENT BARGAIN.
NOW LET US REST
FOR A WHILE.



WE'VE GOT THE
EGG. BUT WHO WILL
HATCH IT?

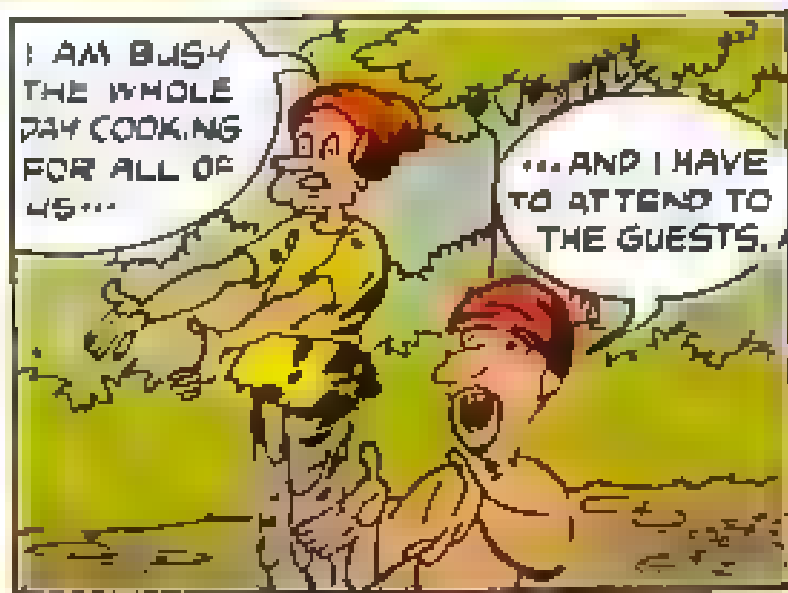
ONE OF US
WILL HAVE
TO DO IT, OF
COURSE.



EACH ONE OF THE LAZY
DISCIPLES HAD HIS OWN
EXCUSE.

I HAVE NO TIME. I'M
ALWAYS BUSY WITH
PREPARATIONS FOR
THE POOJA.

I AND
MADDI HAVE THE
GARDEN AND THE
GROCERY TO
ATTEND TO.

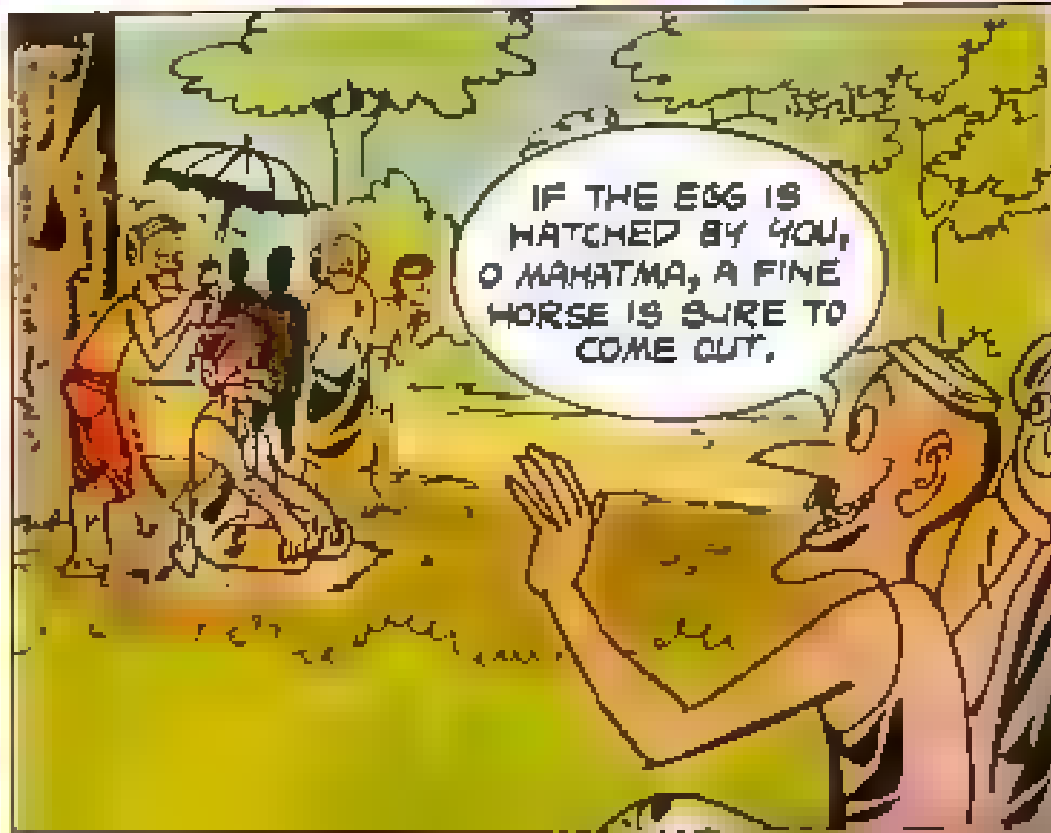


I AM BUSY
THE WHOLE
DAY COOKING
FOR ALL OF
US...

...AND I HAVE
TO ATTEND TO
THE GUESTS.



DON'T WORRY, MY
BOYS. I AM ALWAYS
FREE. I WILL HATCH
IT.



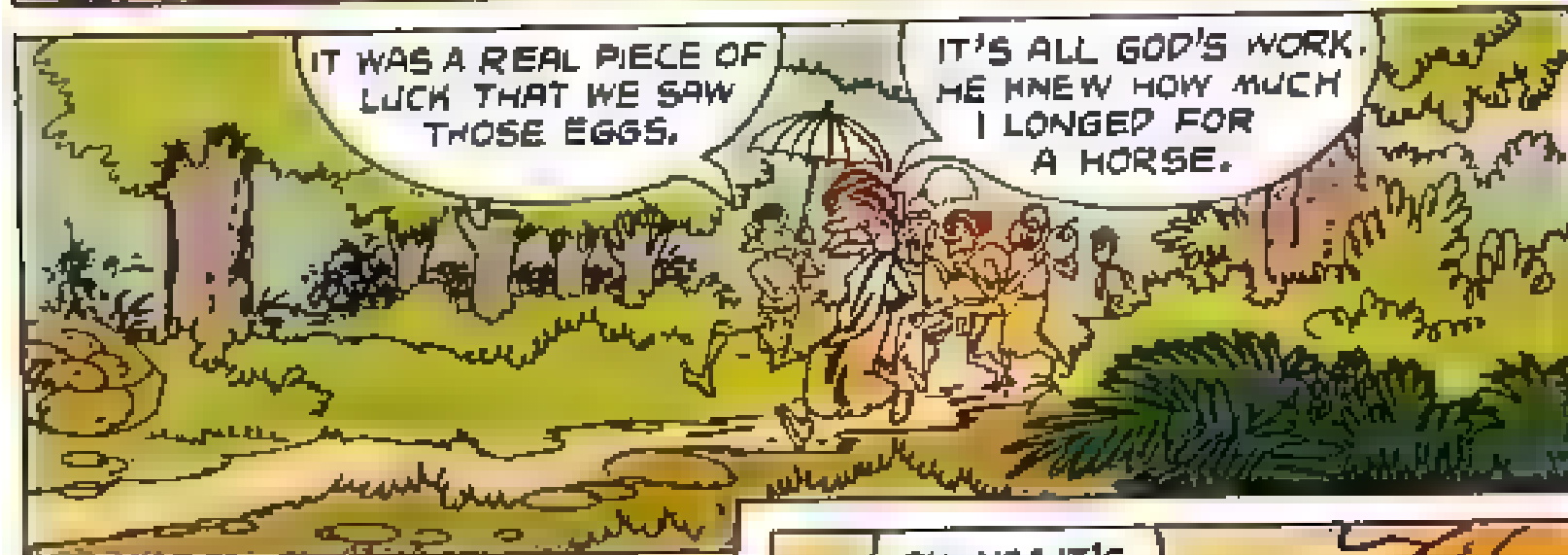
IF THE EGG IS
HATCHED BY YOU,
O MAHATMA, A FINE
HORSE IS SURE TO
COME OUT.

GURU PARAMARTHA AND HIS
DISCIPLES TOOK LEAVE OF
THE 'EGG-SELLER'.



IT WAS A REAL PIECE OF
LUCK THAT WE SAW
THOSE EGGS.

IT'S ALL GOD'S WORK.
HE KNEW HOW MUCH
I LONGED FOR
A HORSE.



AS THEY TRUDGED ON—

OOOH!
HELP! OW! THE
EGG!

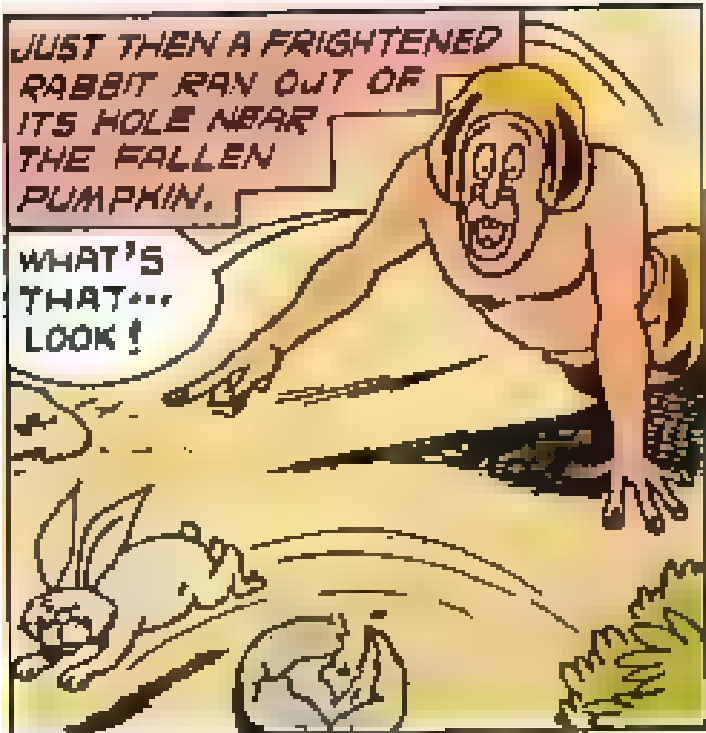


OH, NO! IT'S
BROKEN!

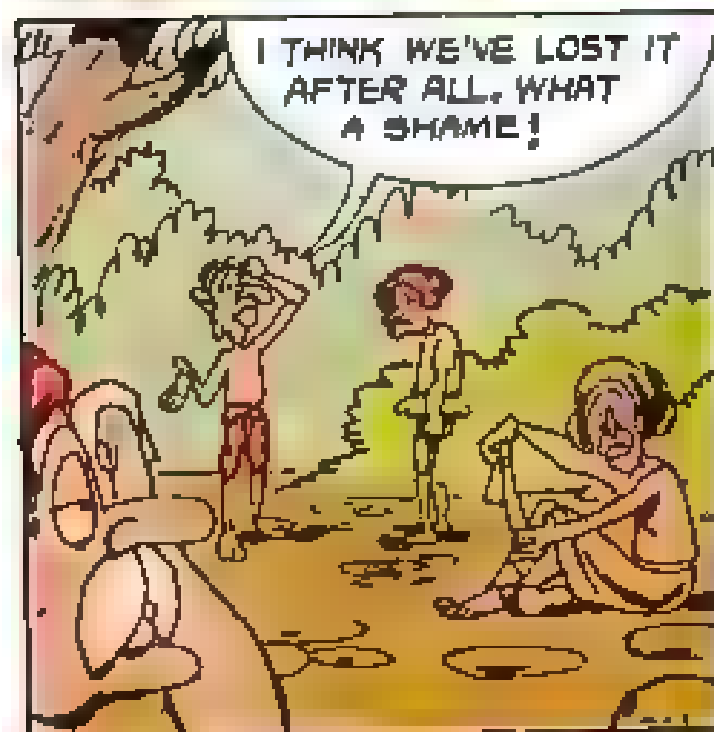


JUST THEN A FRIGHTENED
RABBIT RAN OUT OF
ITS HOLE NEAR
THE FALLEN
PUMPKIN.

WHAT'S
THAT...
LOOK!

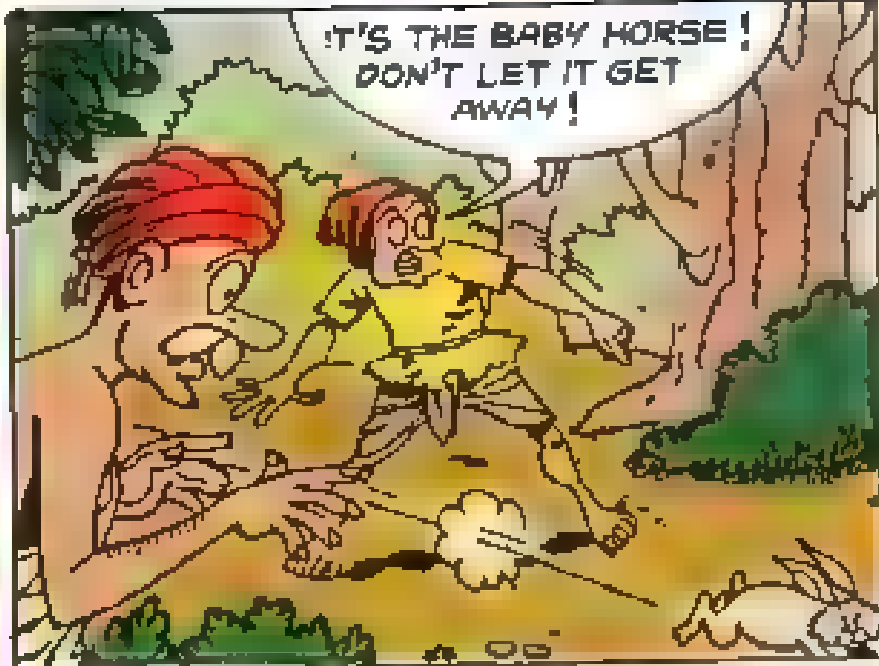


WHERE HAS IT GONE? WE MUST
FIND IT. WE'LL GO THIS WAY.
YOU GO THAT WAY, QUICK!



I THINK WE'VE LOST IT
AFTER ALL. WHAT
A SHAME!

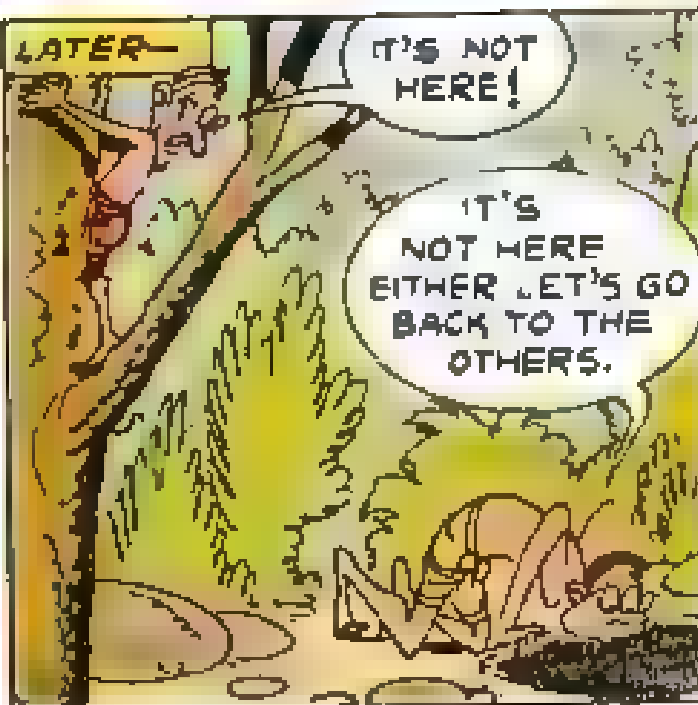
IT'S THE BABY HORSE!
DON'T LET IT GET
AWAY!



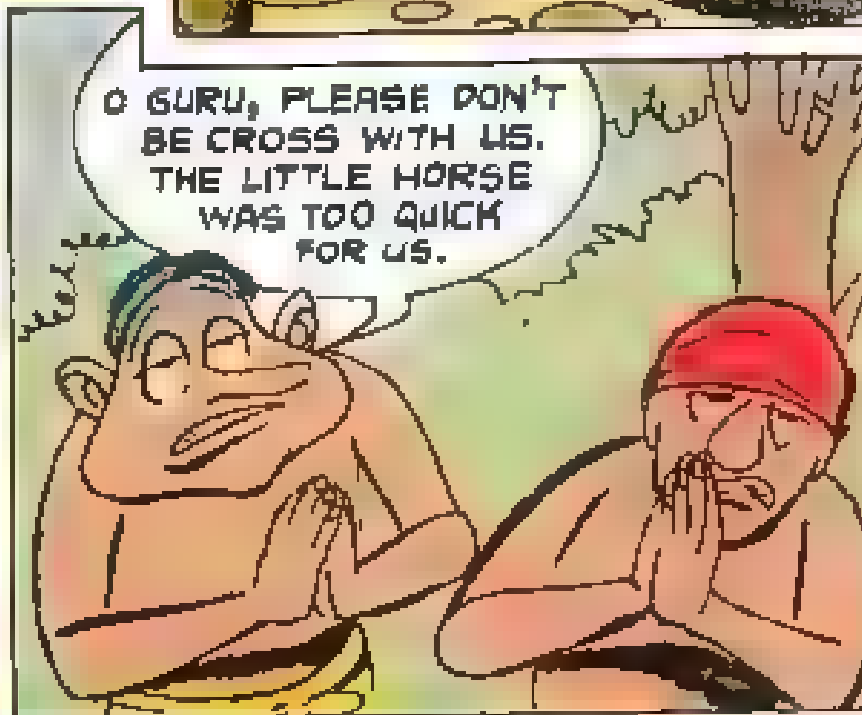
LATER—

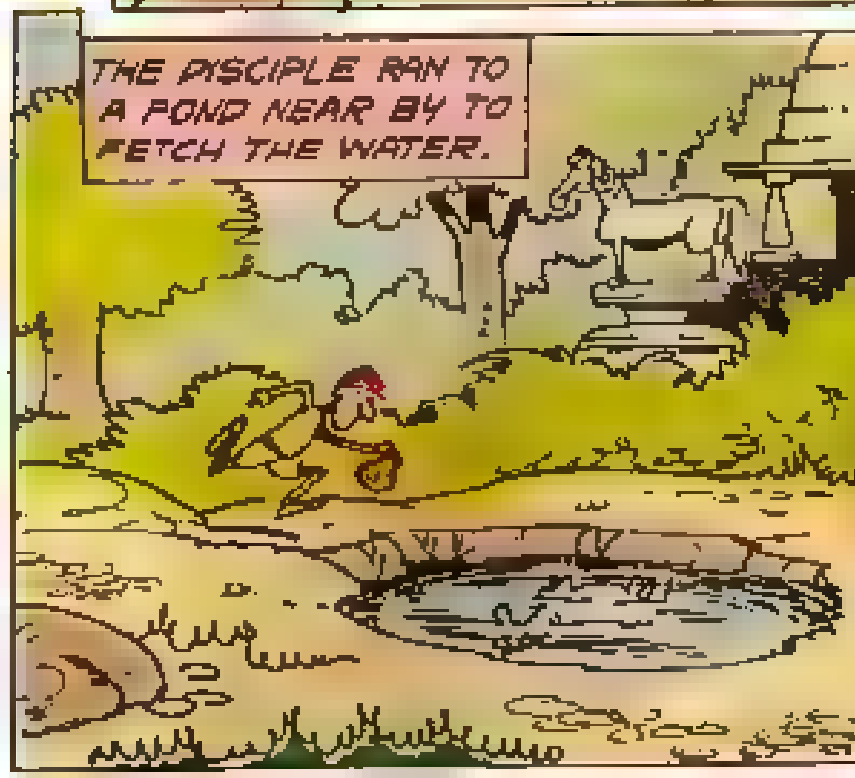
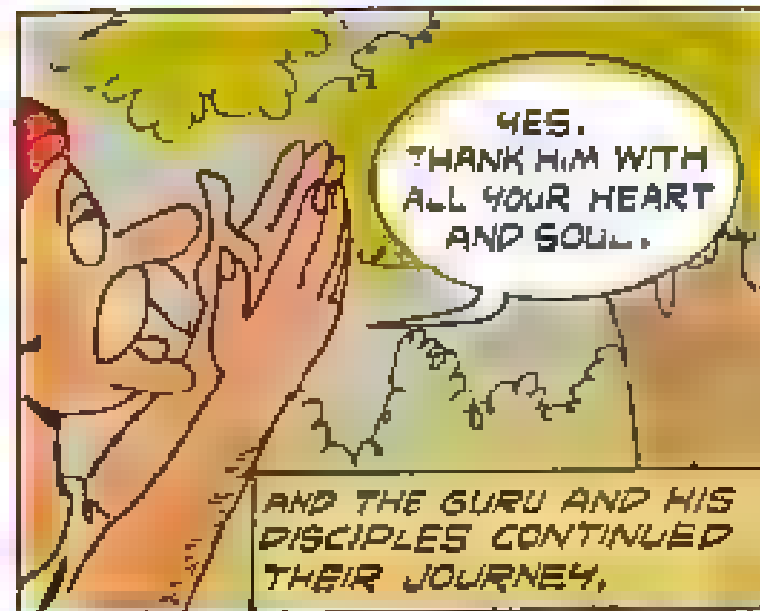
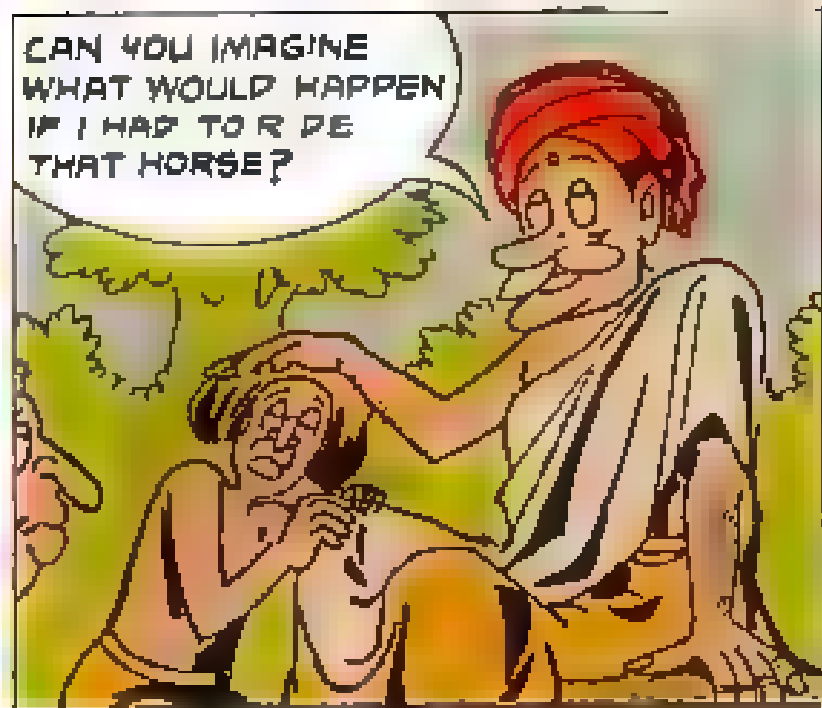
IT'S NOT
HERE!

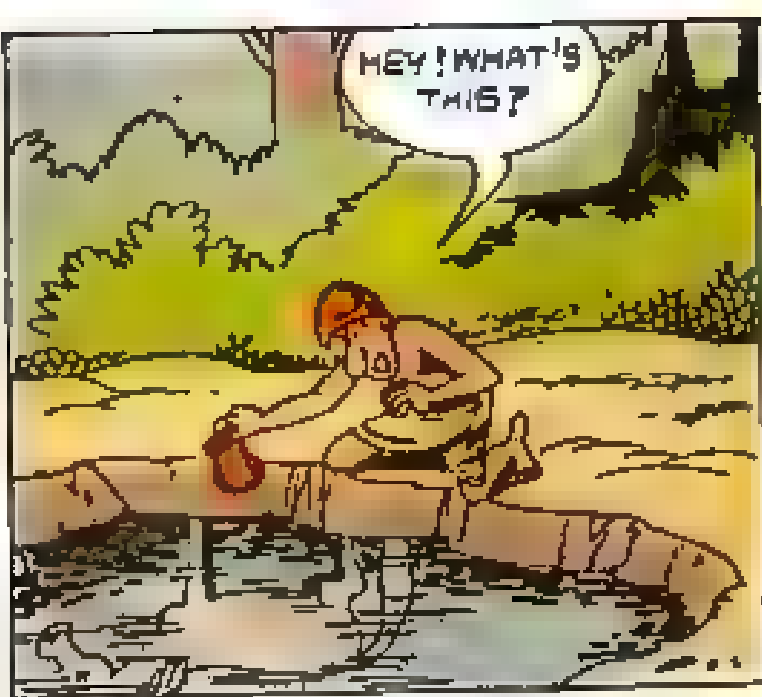
IT'S
NOT HERE
EITHER. LET'S GO
BACK TO THE
OTHERS.



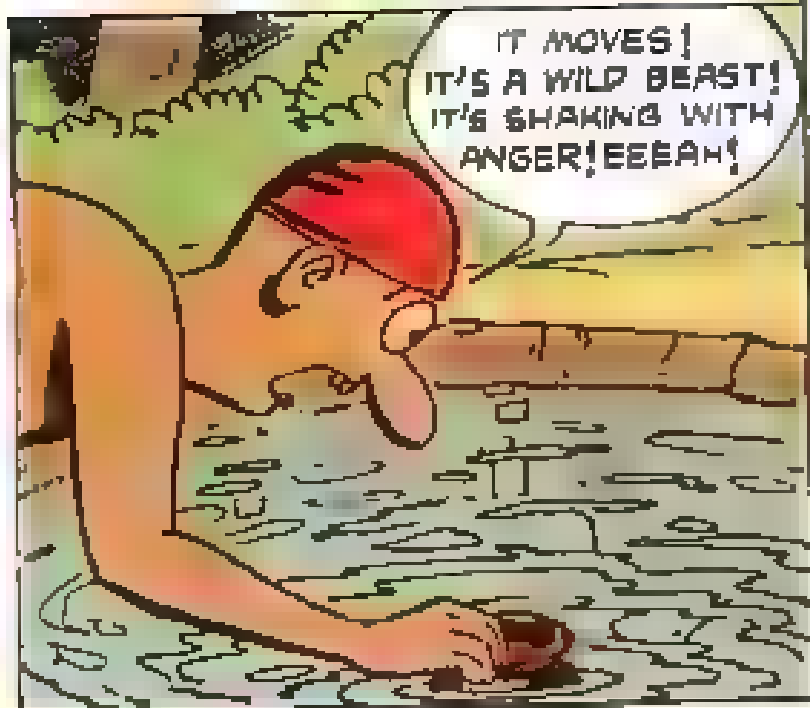
O GURU, PLEASE DON'T
BE CROSS WITH US.
THE LITTLE HORSE
WAS TOO QUICK
FOR US.



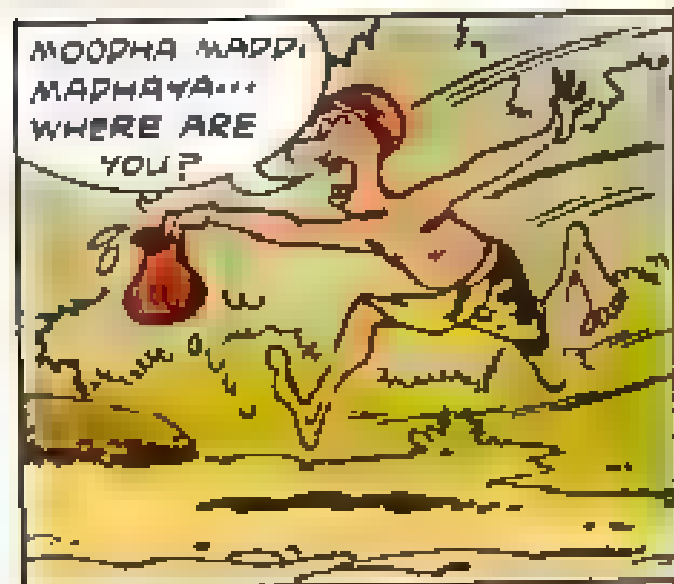




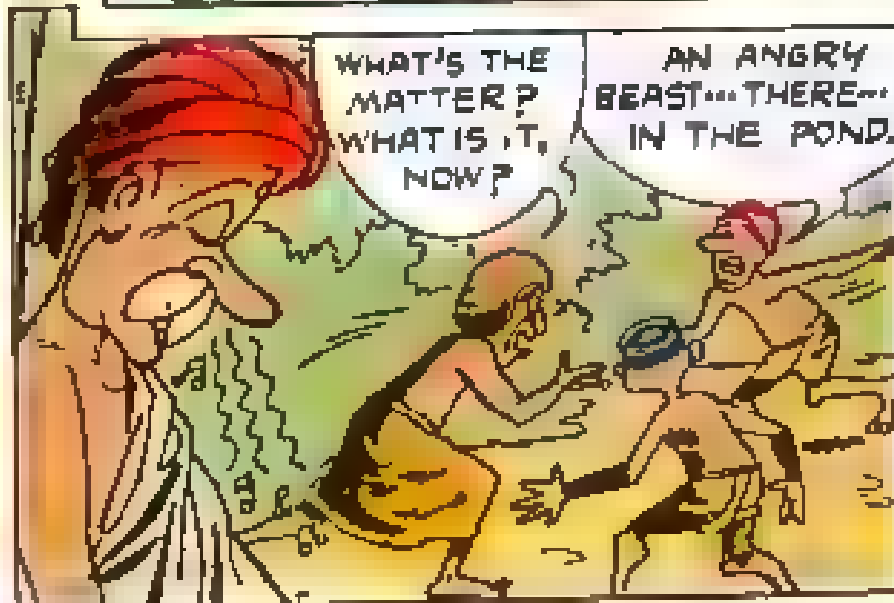
HEY! WHAT'S THIS?



IT MOVES!
IT'S A WILD BEAST!
IT'S SHAKING WITH ANGER! EEEAH!

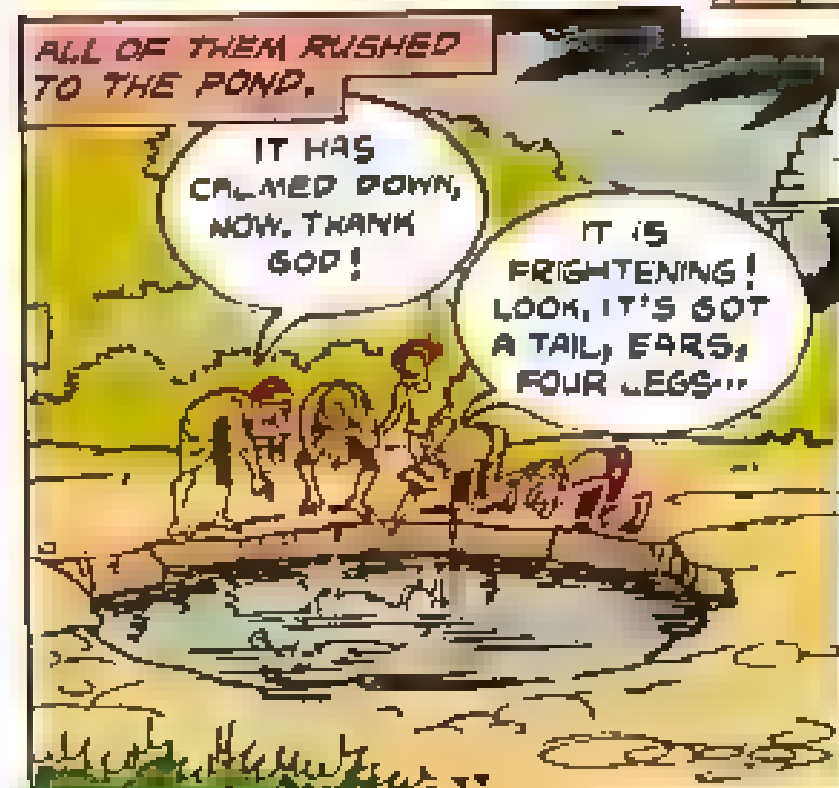


MOODHA MADDI,
MADHAYA...
WHERE ARE YOU?



WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHAT IS IT,
NOW?

AN ANGRY
BEAST... THERE...
IN THE POND.



ALL OF THEM RUSHED
TO THE POND.

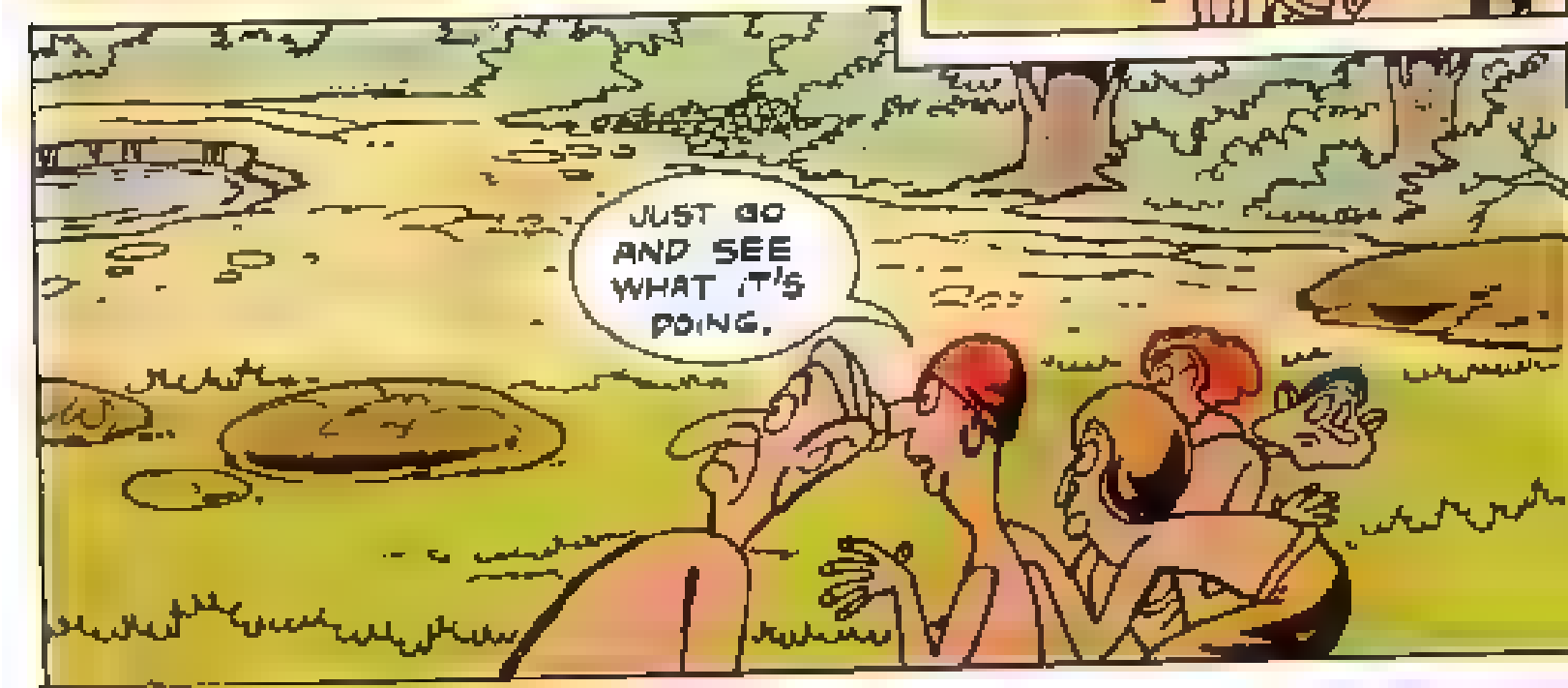
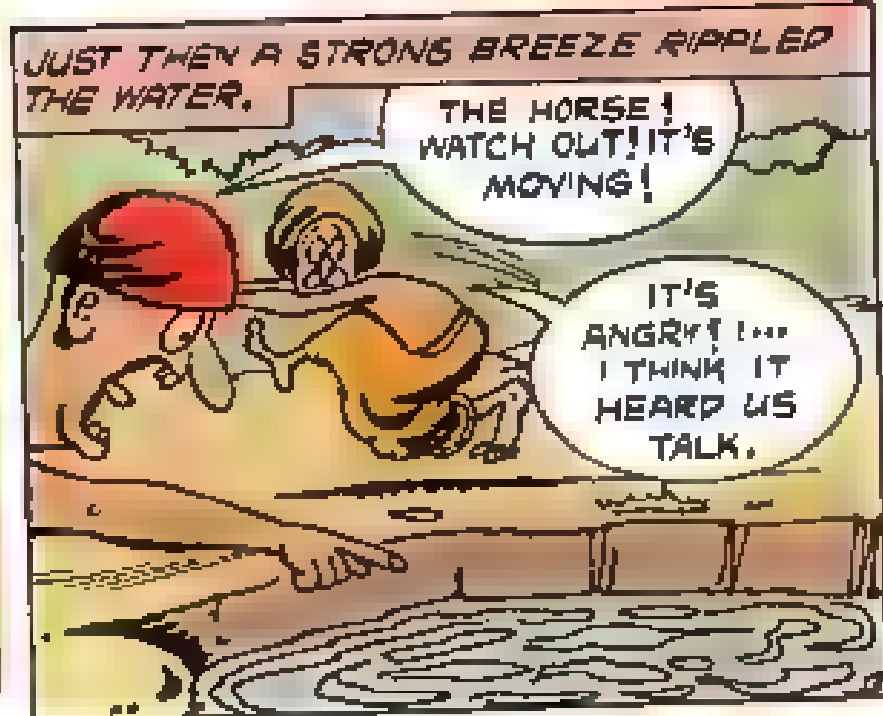
IT HAS
CALMED DOWN,
NOW. THANK
GOD!

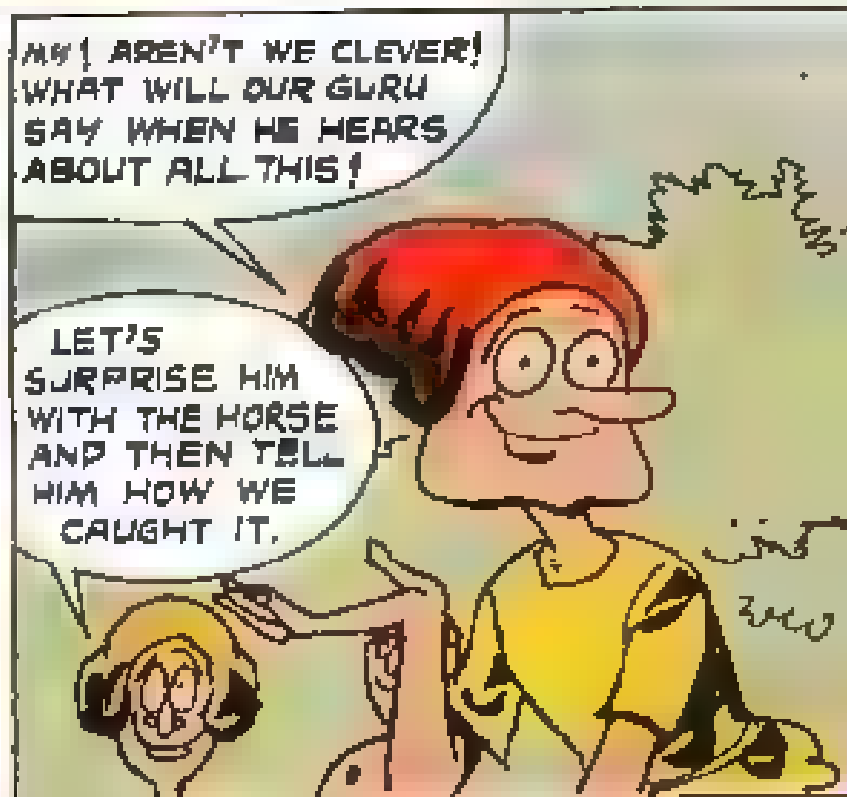
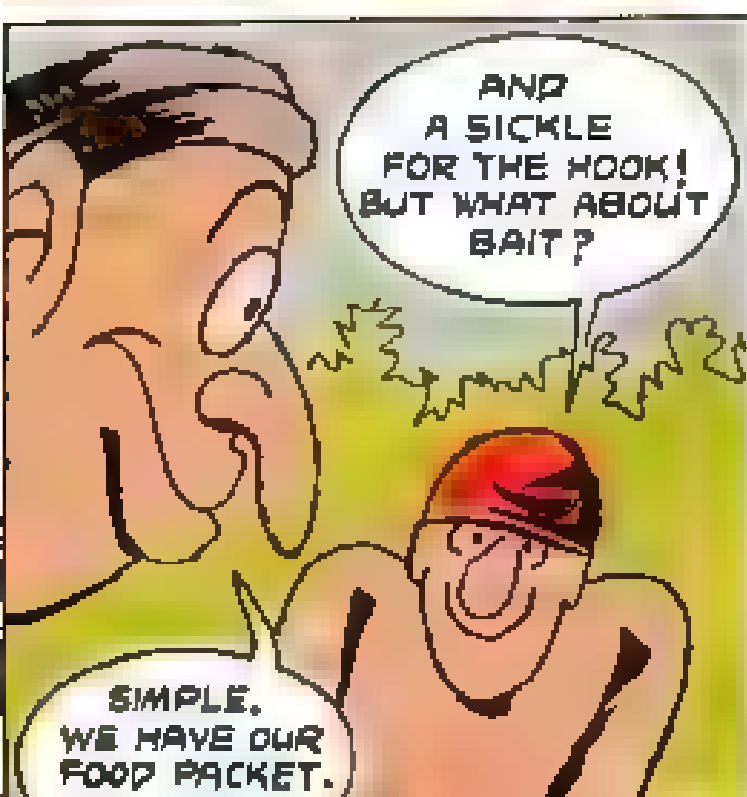
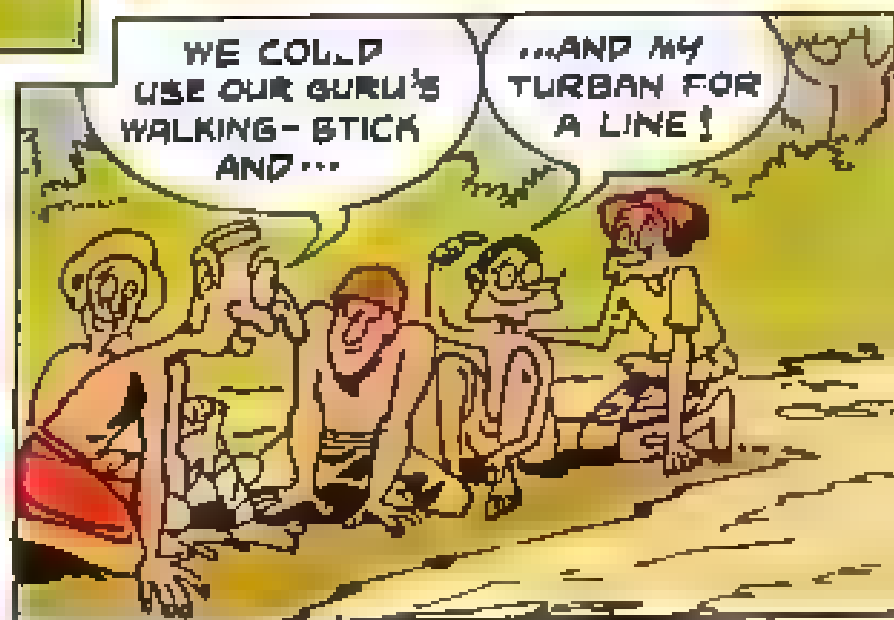
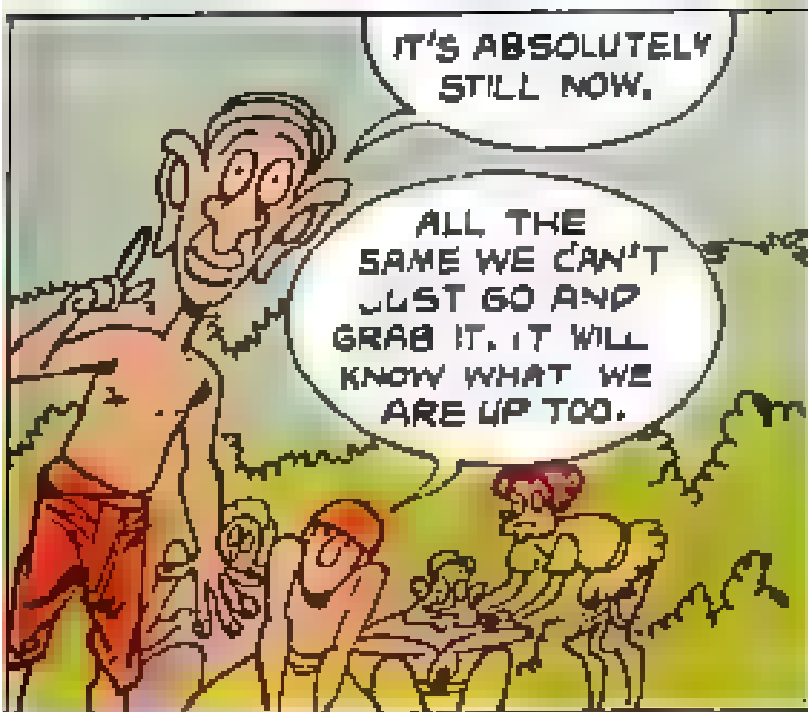
IT IS
FRIGHTENING!
LOOK, IT'S GOT
A TAIL, EARS,
FOUR LEGS...

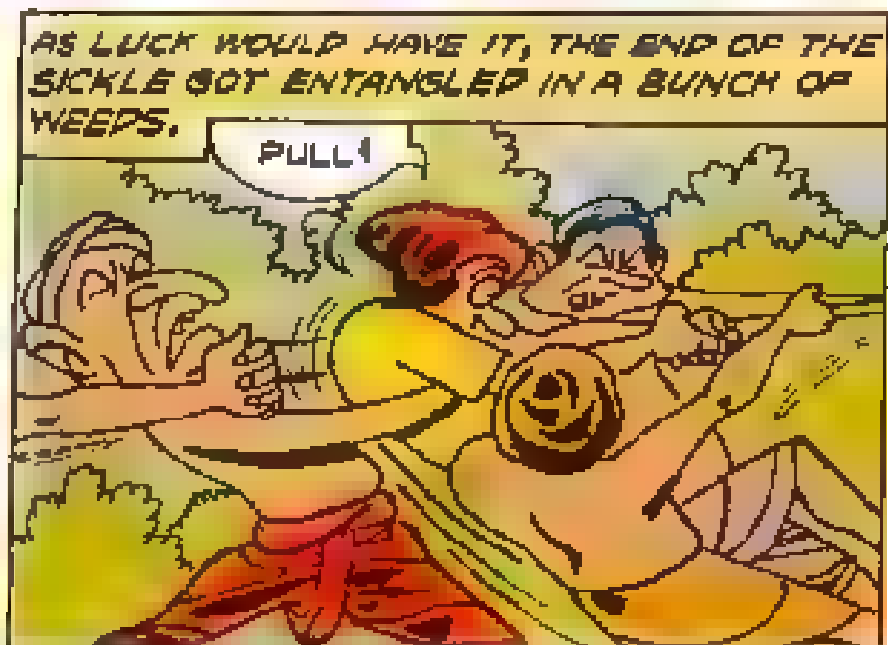
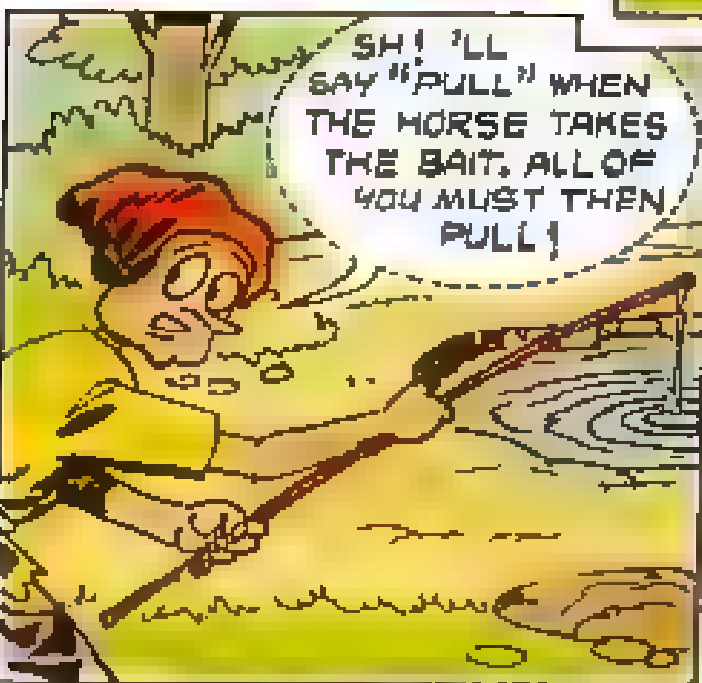
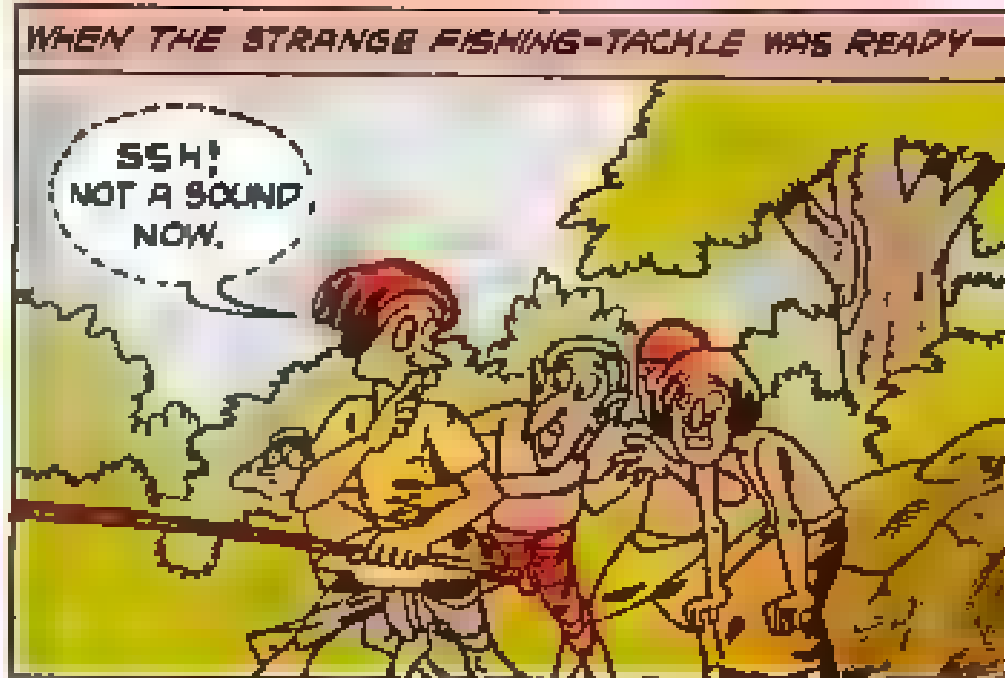


IT'S
A HORSE, YOU
FOOLS!

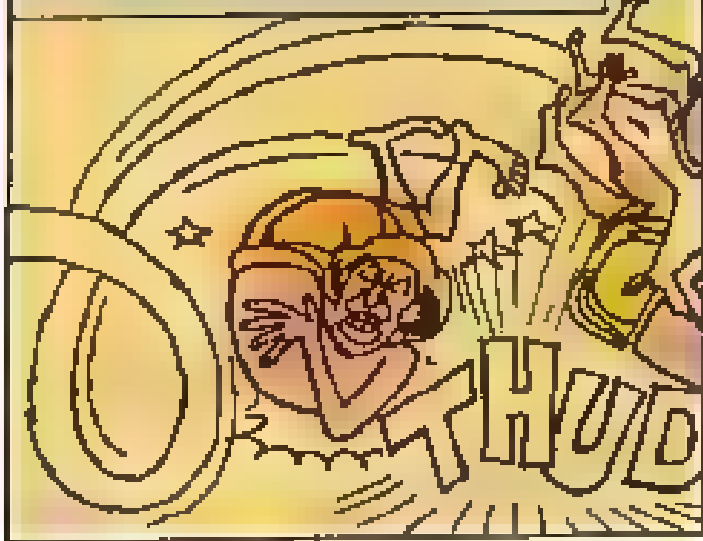
E'S
RIGHT. IT'S
A HORSE!







THEY PULLED SO HARD THAT THE SICKLE CAME LOOSE AND—

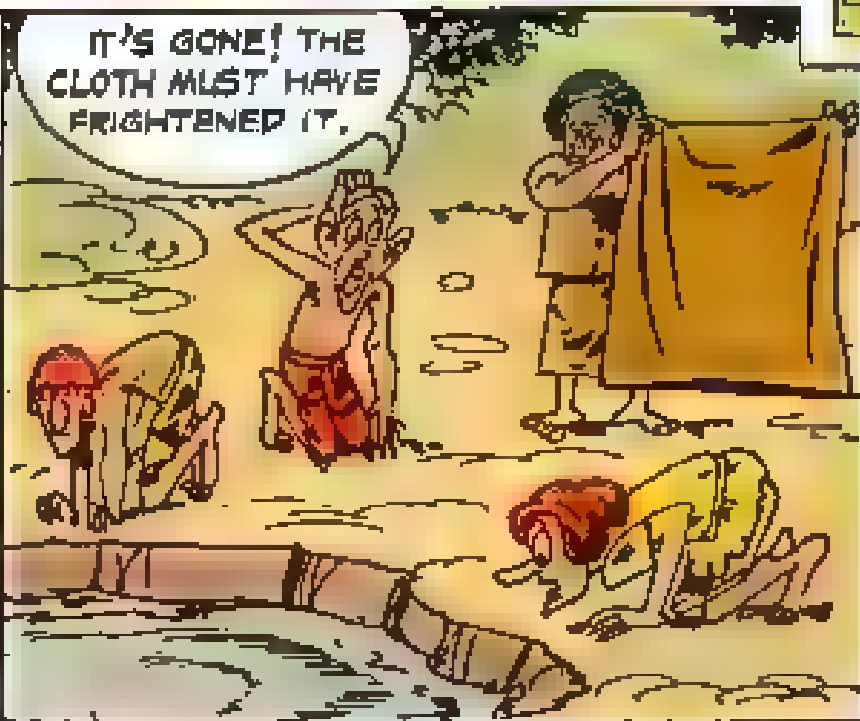


THEY TOLD THE STRANGER ALL ABOUT THEIR 'FISHING EXPEDITION'!

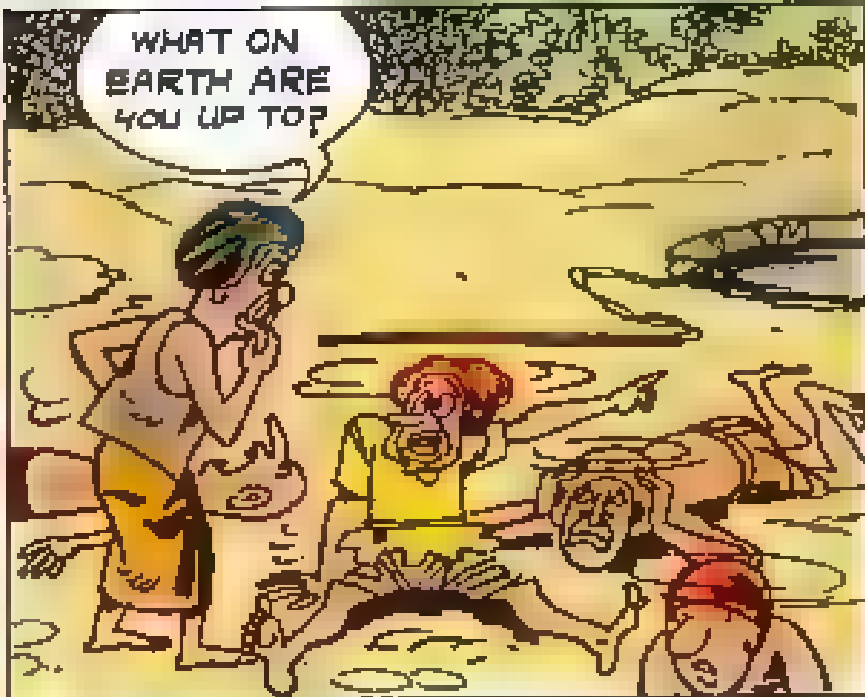
YOU POOR FELLOWS!
WHAT YOU SAW WAS
ONLY A SHADOW!
WAIT!



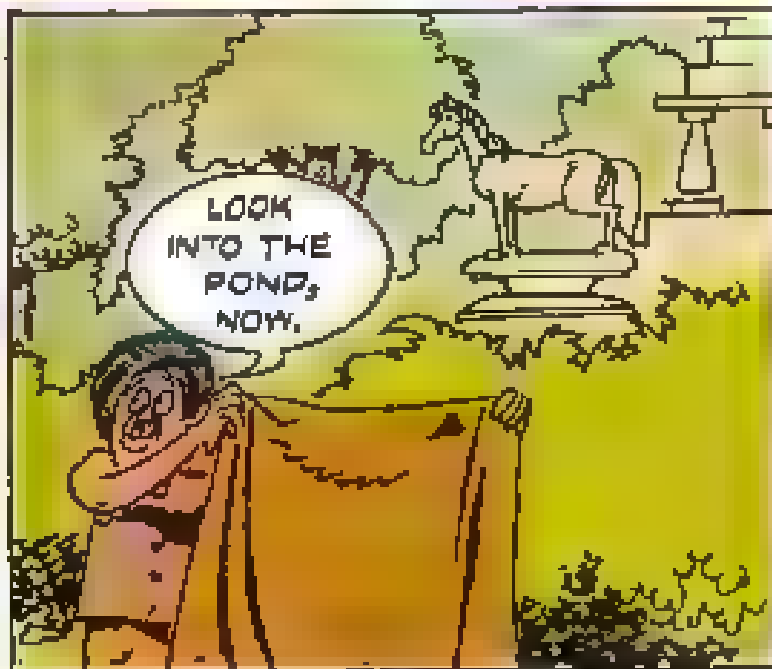
IT'S GONE! THE
CLOTH MUST HAVE
FRIGHTENED IT.



WHAT ON
EARTH ARE
YOU UP TO?

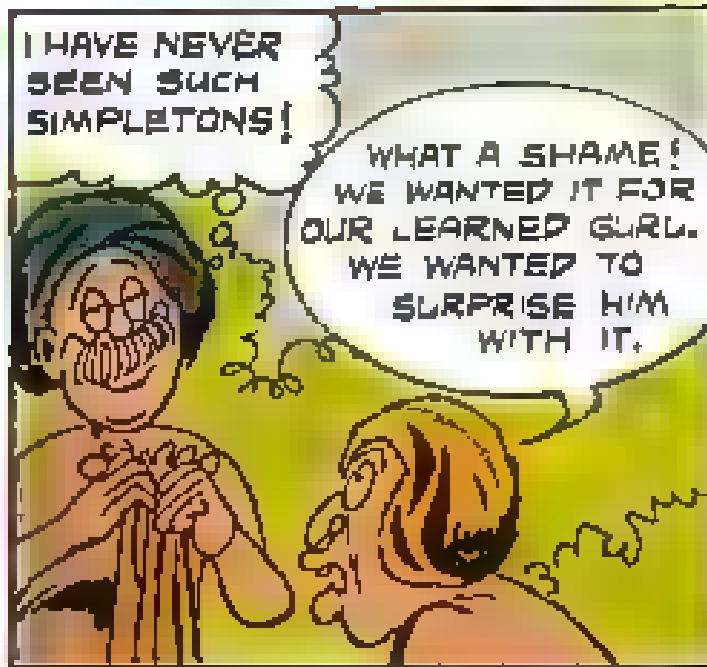


LOOK
INTO THE
POND,
NOW.



I HAVE NEVER
SEEN SUCH
SIMPLETONS!

WHAT A SHAME!
WE WANTED IT FOR
OUR LEARNED GURU.
WE WANTED TO
SURPRISE HIM
WITH IT.



I HAVE AN OLD HORSE TO SPARE... YOU CAN COME AND TAKE IT IF YOU WANT.

OH, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, SIR. I'LL FETCH OUR GURU.

GURU PARAMARTHA AND HIS DISCIPLES WENT WITH THE STRANGER...



WHAT A FINE, NOBLE ANIMAL! WILL YOU HELP ME MOUNT HIM.



... TO HIS HOUSE.

HERE! HE'S ALL YOURS.

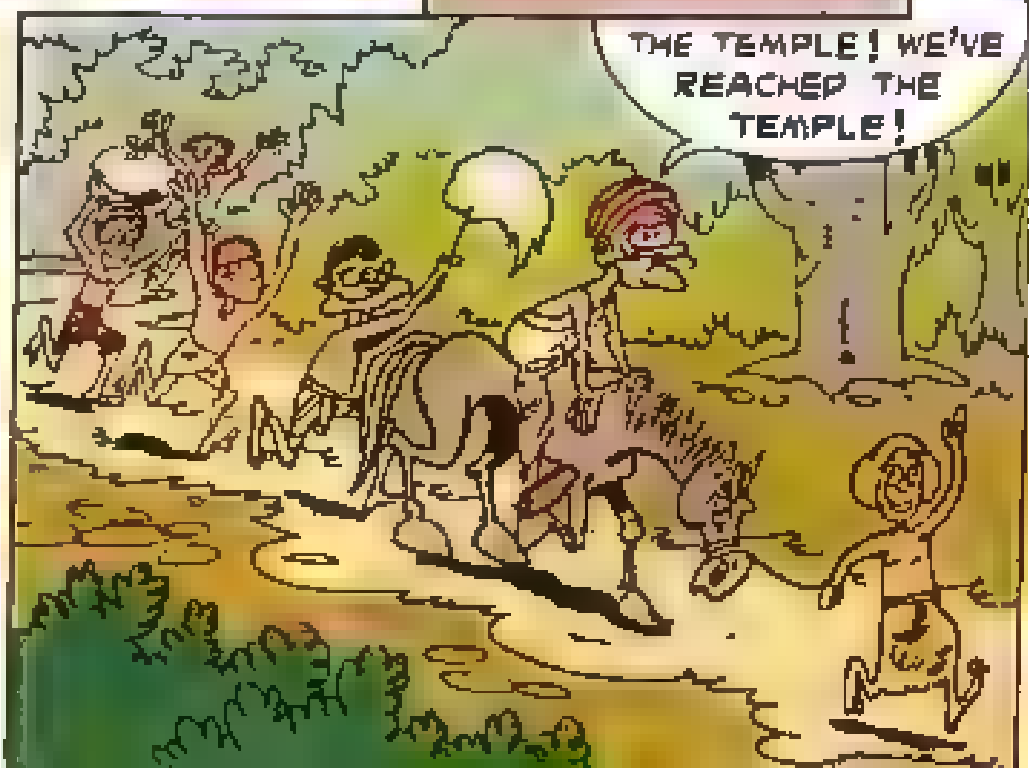


NOW LET US GO ON.

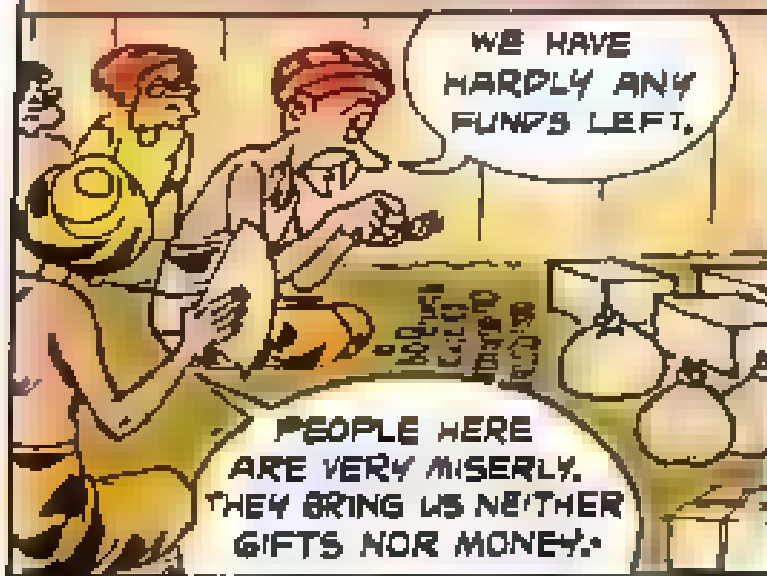


SOME TIME LATER —

THE TEMPLE! WE'VE REACHED THE TEMPLE!



A FEW DAYS LATER, GURU PARAMARTHA AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE DISCUSSING A MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE.



WE HAVE HARDLY ANY FUNDS LEFT.

PEOPLE HERE ARE VERY MISERLY. THEY BRING US NEITHER GIFTS NOR MONEY.

WE CAN'T SIT HERE AND WAIT FOR THEM TO COME AND DONATE GIFTS. WE MUST GO TO THEM.

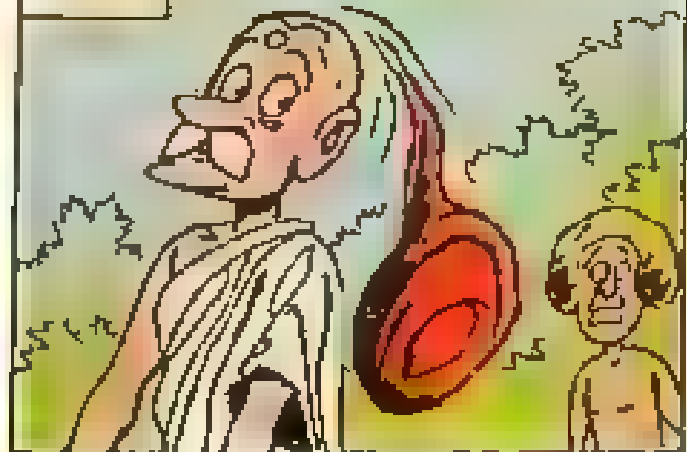
AS YOU COMMAND, O GURU.



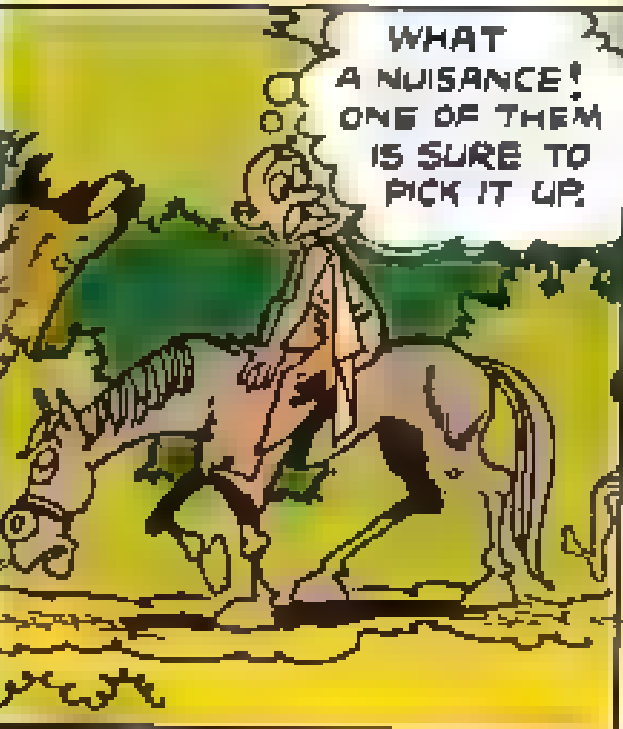
SO NEXT MORNING, GURU PARAMARTHA AND HIS DISCIPLES SET OUT ON A FUND-RAISING TOUR.



ON THE WAY, THE GURU'S TURBAN SLIPPED FROM HIS HEAD AND FELL.



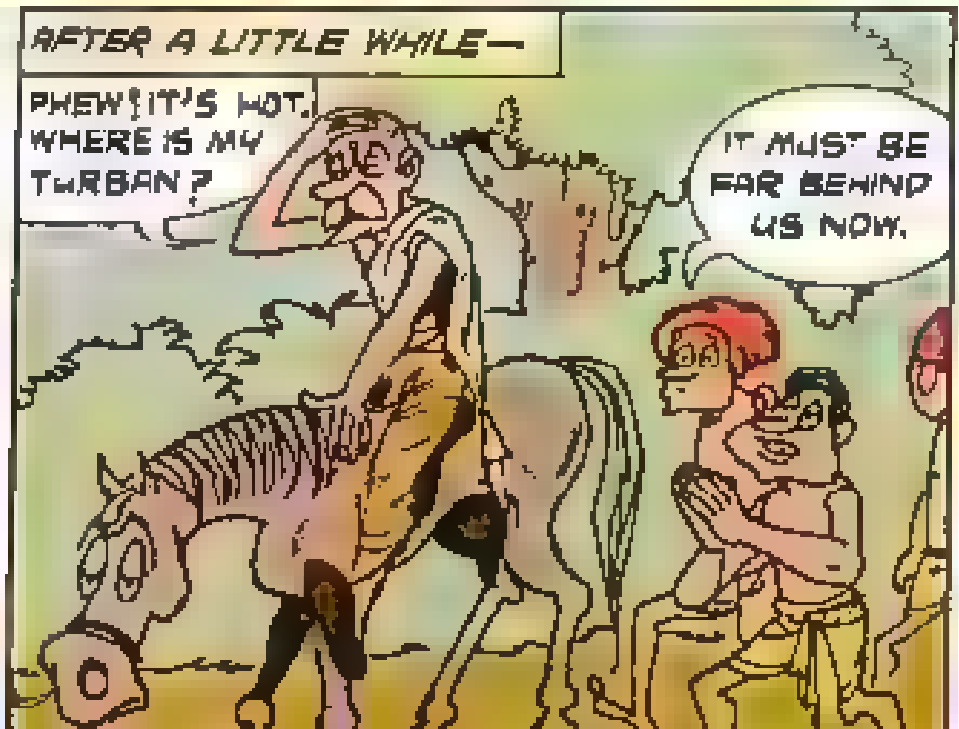
WHAT A NUISANCE! ONE OF THEM IS SURE TO PICK IT UP.



AFTER A LITTLE WHILE—

PHEW! IT'S HOT. WHERE IS MY TURBAN?

IT MUST BE FAR BEHIND US NOW.



FOOLS! DIDN'T YOU
HAVE THE SENSE
TO PICK IT UP?

FORGIVE
US, GLRU, I'LL
RUN BACK
AND PICK
IT UP.

THEN GO. AND IN
FUTURE PICK UP
ANYTHING THAT'S
DROPPED ON THE
WAY AND GIVE
IT TO ME.

THE TURBAN WAS SOON RESTORED TO
THE GURL AND THE GROUP WALKED ON.

AFTER THEY HAD COVERED SOME
DISTANCE, THE GURL'S HORSE
DROPPED SOME PUNG.

QUICK! PICK
IT UP

THE
HORSE DROPPED
THIS ON THE
WAY.

GOD HELP ME!
NOW ISN'T THIS
THE LIMIT!

WHY
ARE YOU
CROSS WITH
ME?

YOU ASKED US TO PICK UP
WHATEVER WAS DROPPED
AND I OBEYED YOU.

IF WE DON'T PICK
UP WHAT IS DROPPED,
OUR GURU IS CROSS. IF
WE DO, HE'S CROSS. I'M
UTTERLY CONFUSED,
HOW ARE WE TO
SERVE HIM?

DON'T WORRY, YOU'LL LEARN BY
EXPERIENCE AND I AM ALWAYS
THERE TO GUIDE YOU.

PERHAPS IF YOU GIVE US
A LIST OF ALL THE THINGS
WHICH HAVE TO BE PICKED
UP, WE COULD SERVE
YOU BETTER.

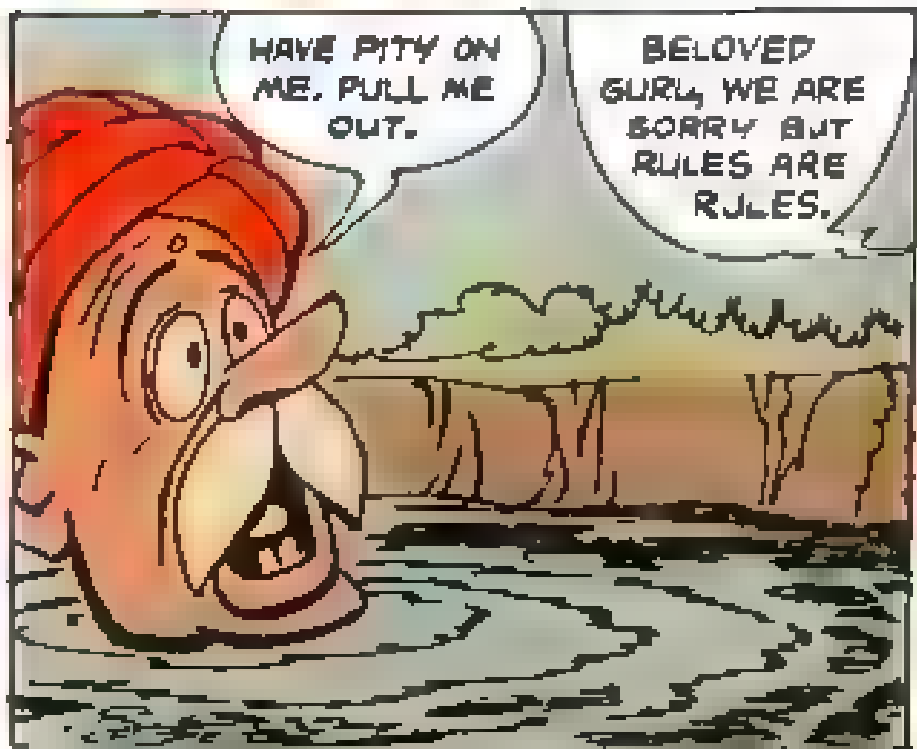
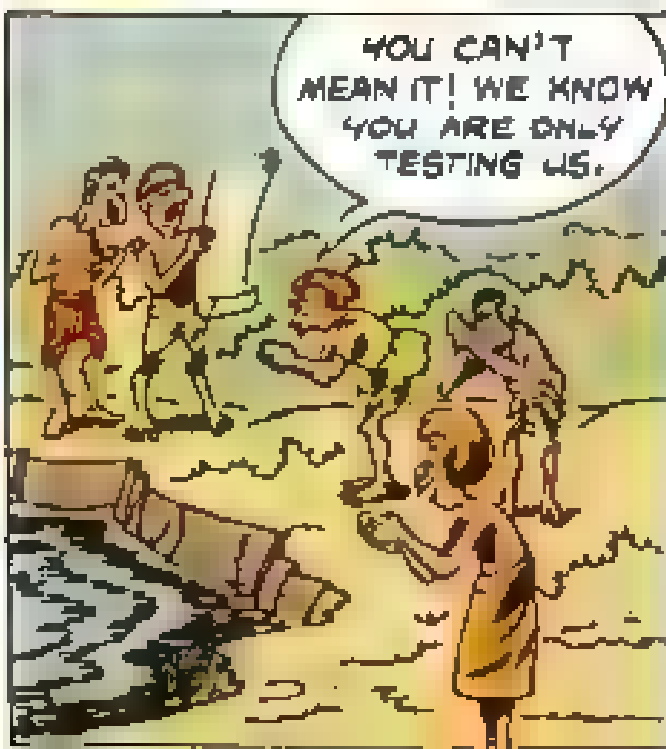
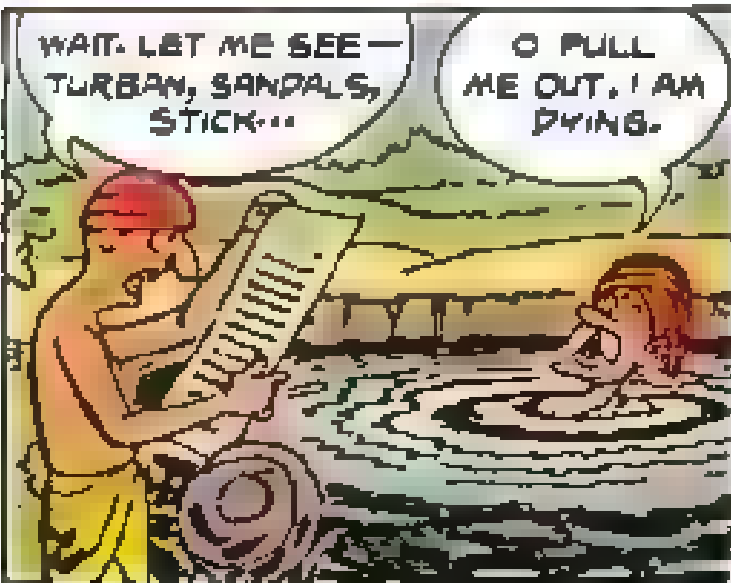
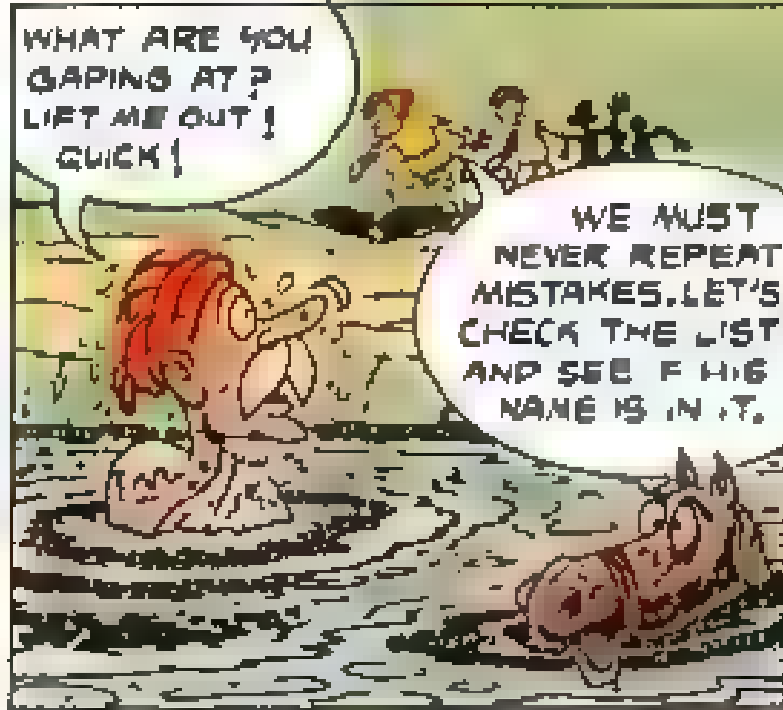
GURU PARAMARTHA MADE THE LIST
AND GAVE IT TO HIS DISCIPLES.

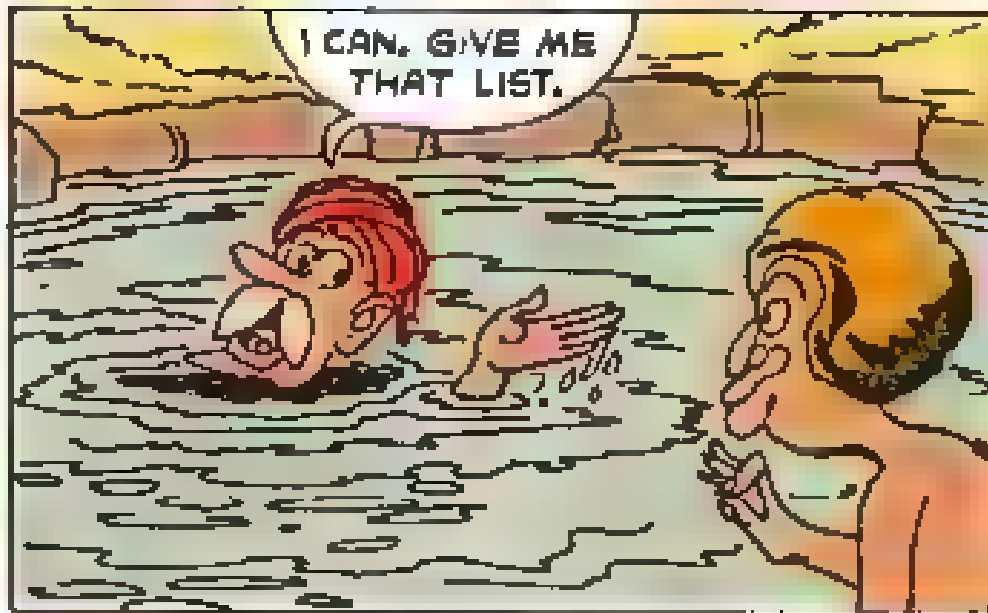
SEE THAT YOU FOLLOW
IT STRICTLY, GO BY
THE RULE, ALWAYS.

DON'T WORRY
GURU, RULES ARE
RULES AND WE WILL
NEVER BREAK
THEM.

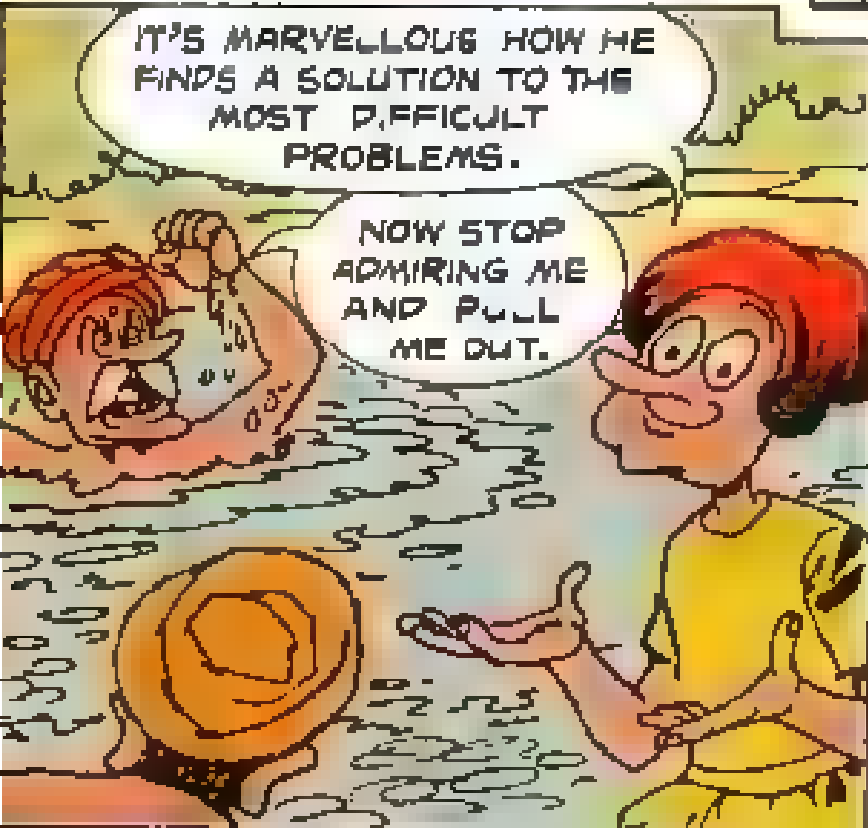
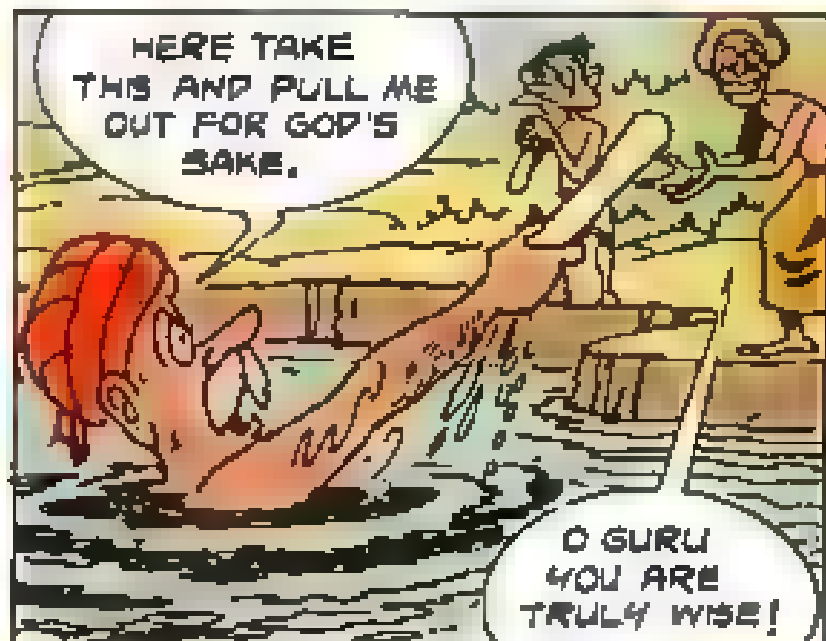
AS THEY WENT FURTHER ALONG THE ROUGH
ROAD, THE HORSE STUMBLER.

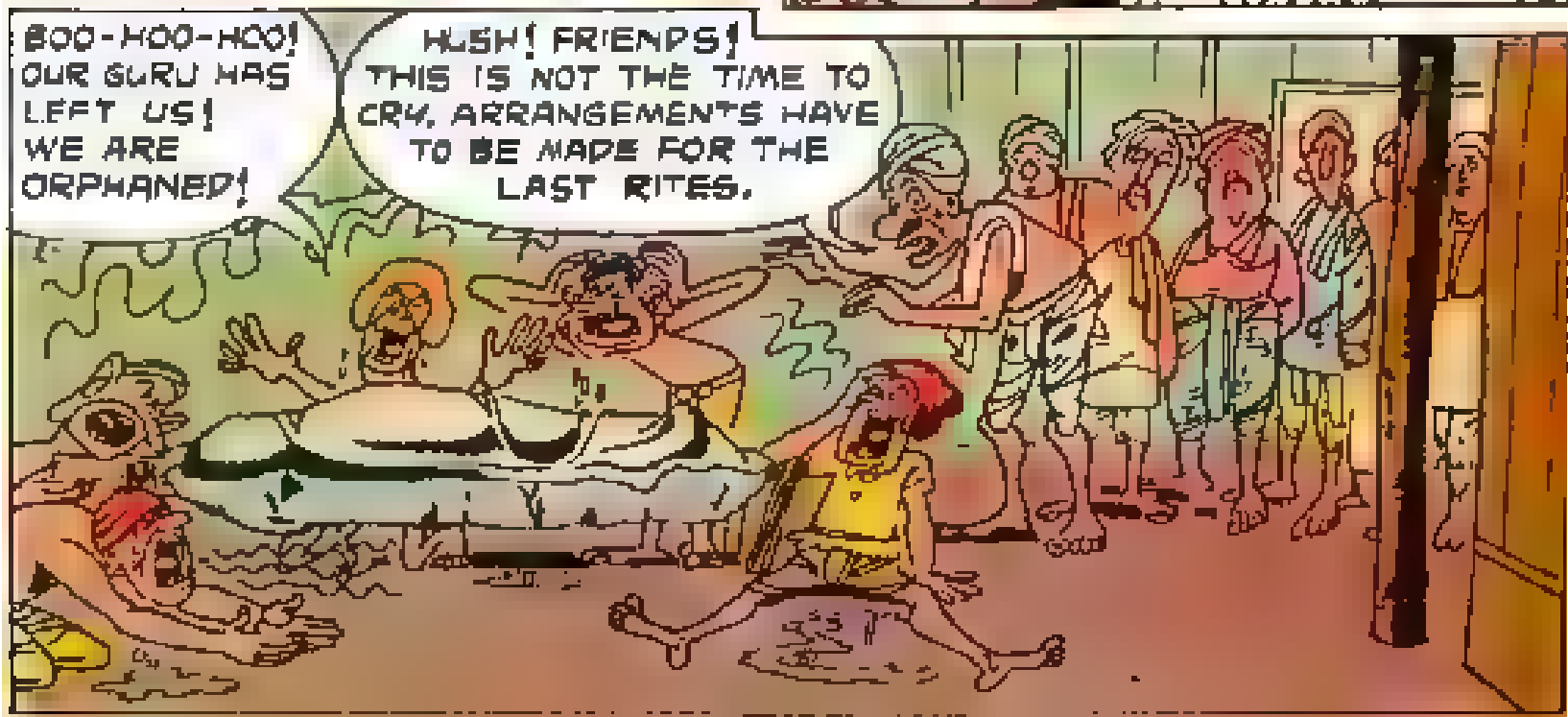
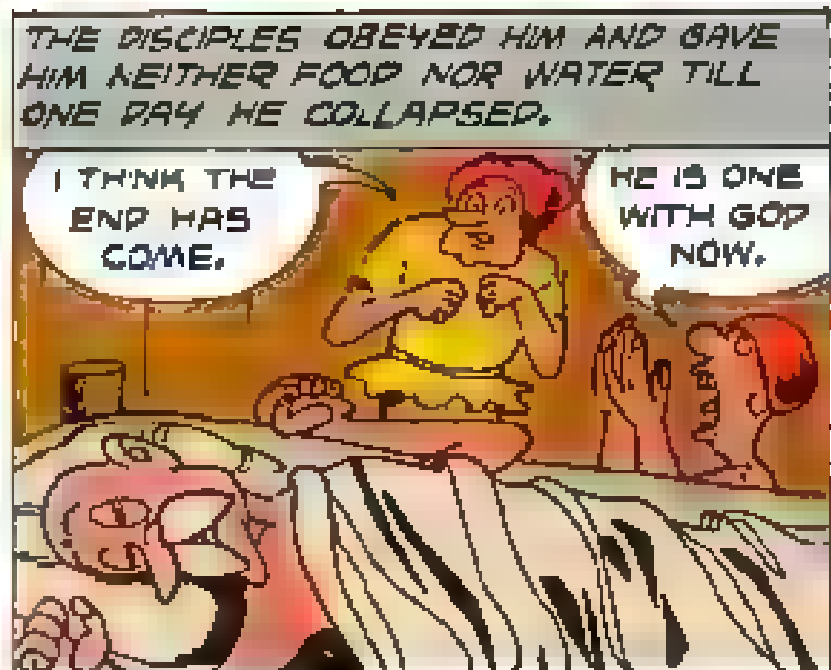
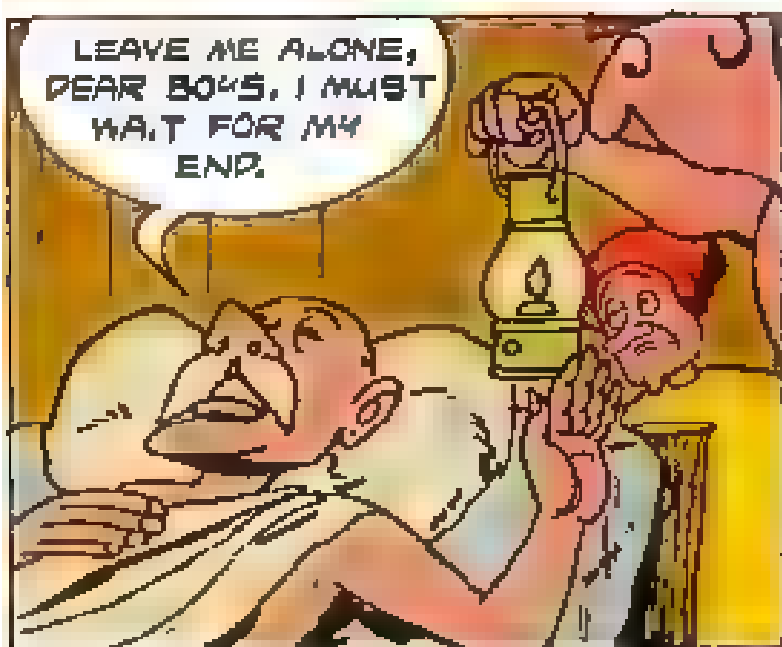
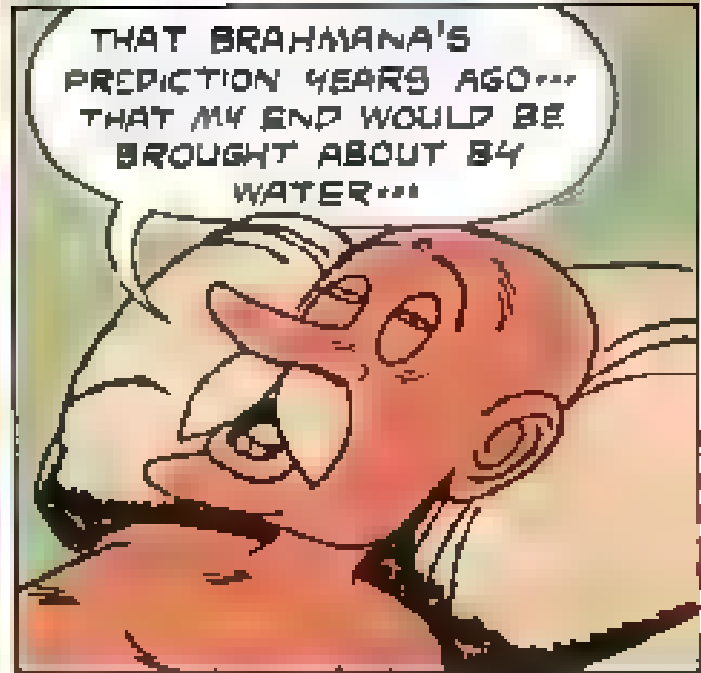
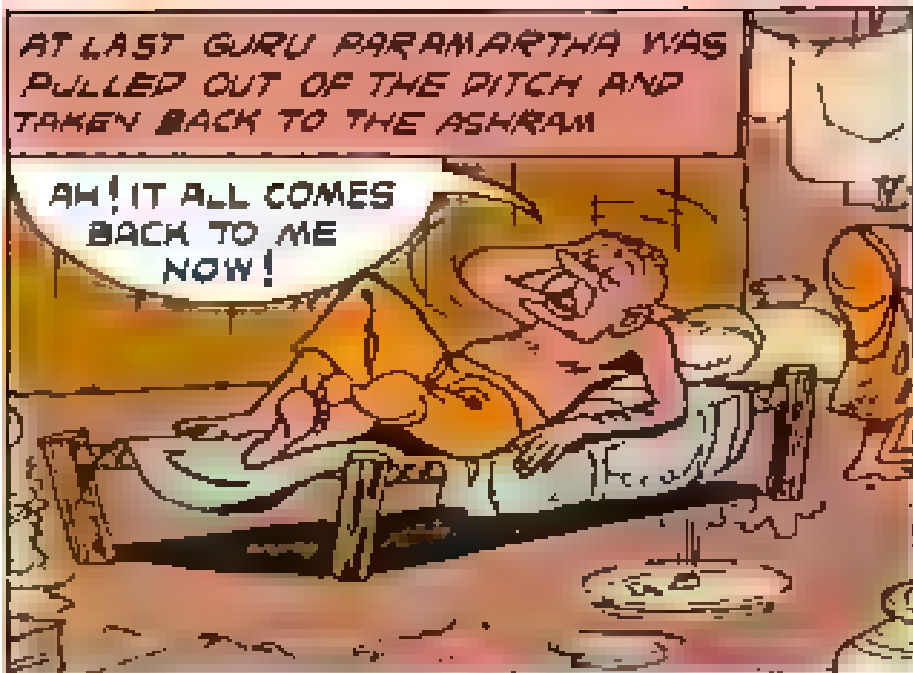
MADDI, MOODHA, PEDDA...
HOLD ME! HOLD ME,
SOMEONE!





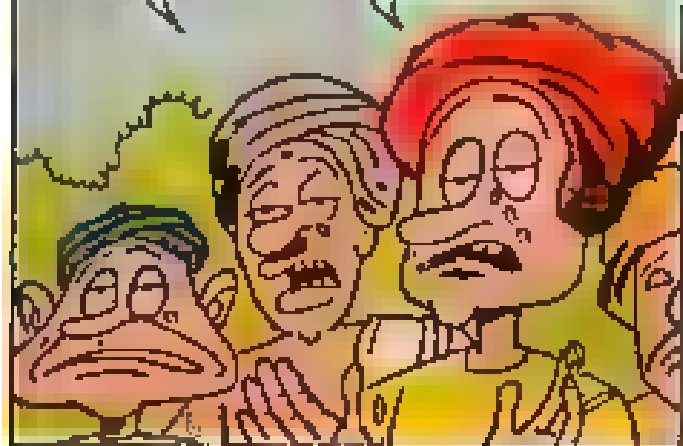
WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY
GURU PARAMARTHA SOMEHOW
MANAGED TO ADD HIS OWN
NAME TO THE LIST.





THERE'S
A LOT TO BE
DONE.

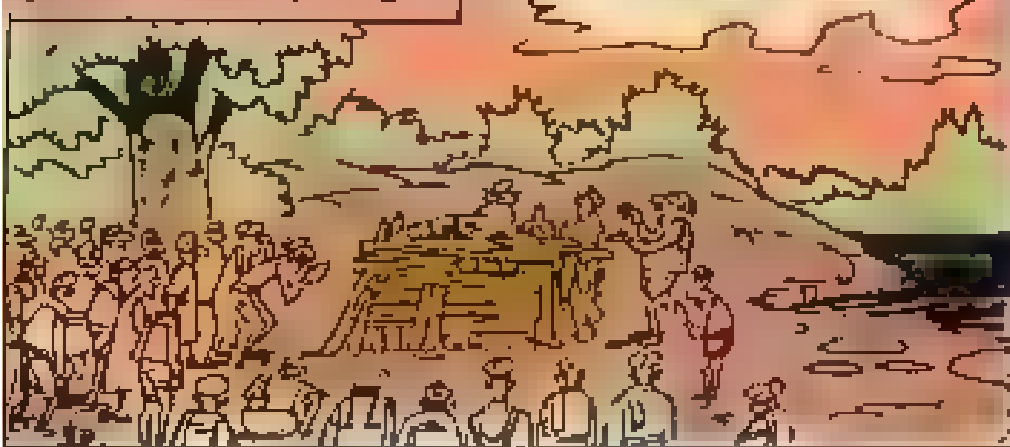
THE GREAT
MAHATMA MUST
HAVE A GRAND
FUNERAL.



SOLEMNLY THEY CARRIED THE
BODY TO THE CREMATORY...



...AND PLACED IT ON THE
PYRE, THEN THEY BEGAN
CHANTING HYMNS.



AS THEIR VOICES GREW
LOUDER AND LOUDER—

WHERE AM I? WATER,
WATER.



IT'S
A GHOST!

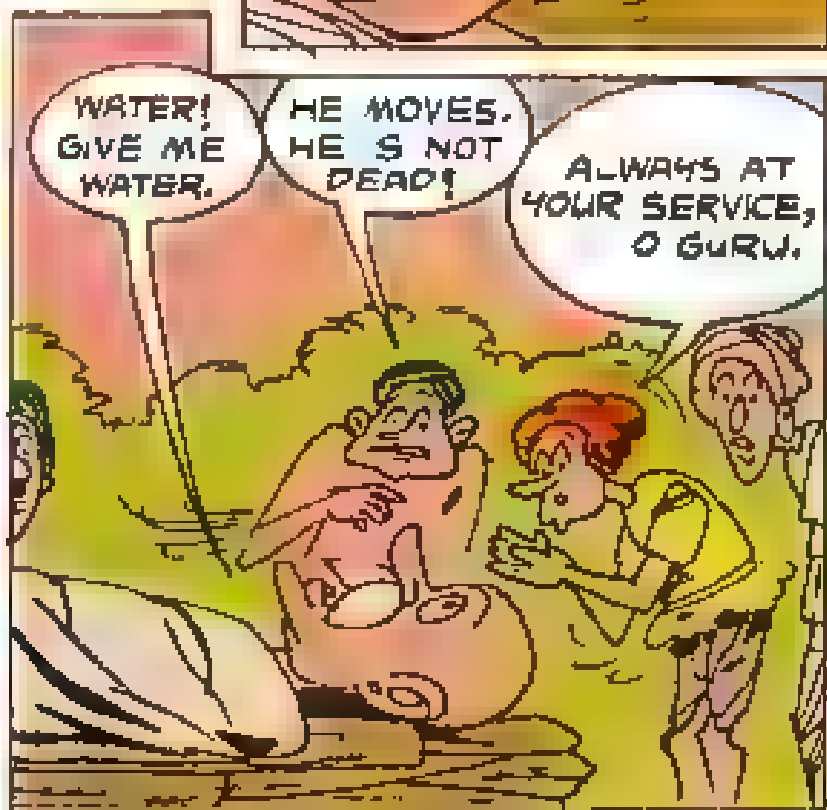
A SPIRIT
HAS POSSESSED
HIS CORPSE!



WATER!
GIVE ME
WATER.

HE MOVES.
HE'S NOT
DEAD!

ALWAYS AT
YOUR SERVICE,
O GURU.





IT'S
A MIRACLE! THE
DEAD SAINT HAS
COME ALIVE.

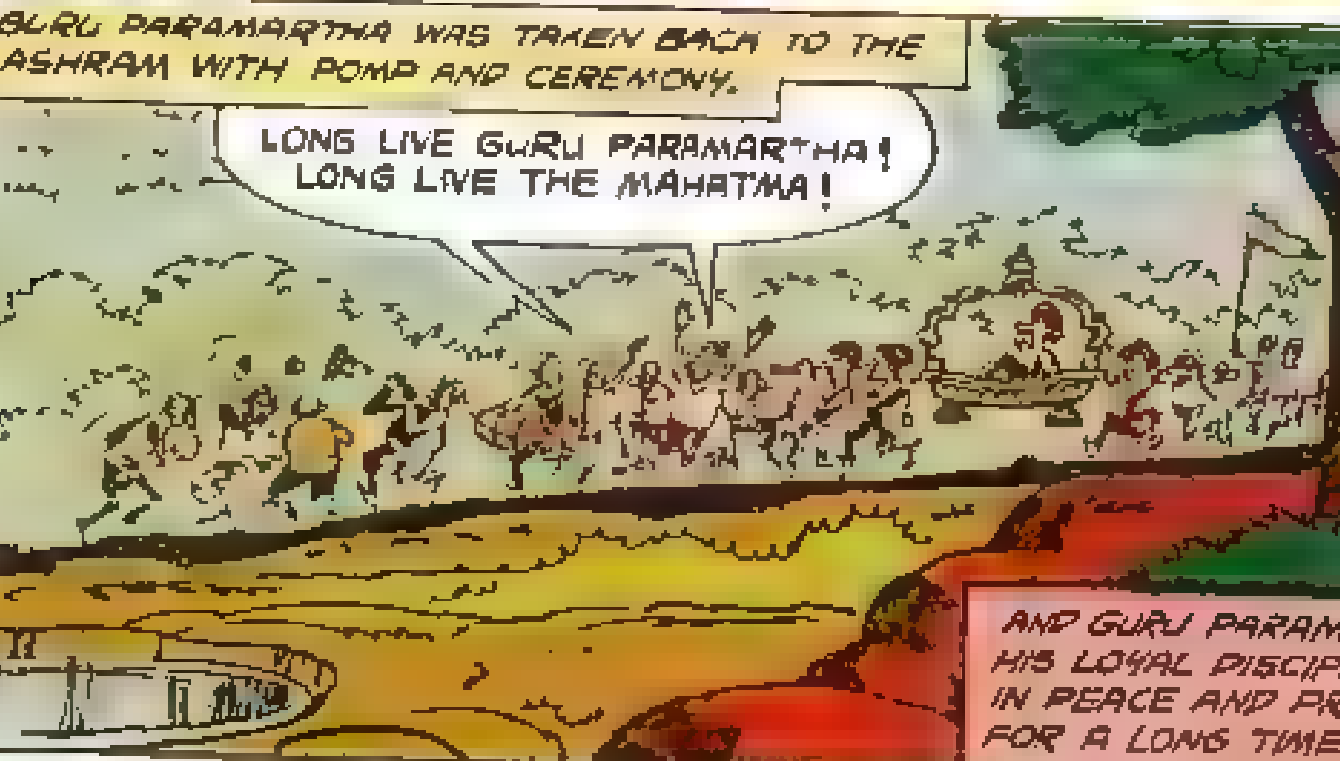
HE IS TRULY
A MAHATMA!



SUCH MEN ARE BORN
ONLY ONCE IN MANY
GENERATIONS.

GURU PARAMARTHA WAS TAKEN BACK TO THE
ASHRAM WITH POMP AND CEREMONY.

LONG LIVE GURU PARAMARTHA!
LONG LIVE THE MAHATMA!



AND GURU PARAMARTHA AND
HIS LOYAL DISCIPLES LIVED
IN PEACE AND PROSPERITY
FOR A LONG TIME TO COME.

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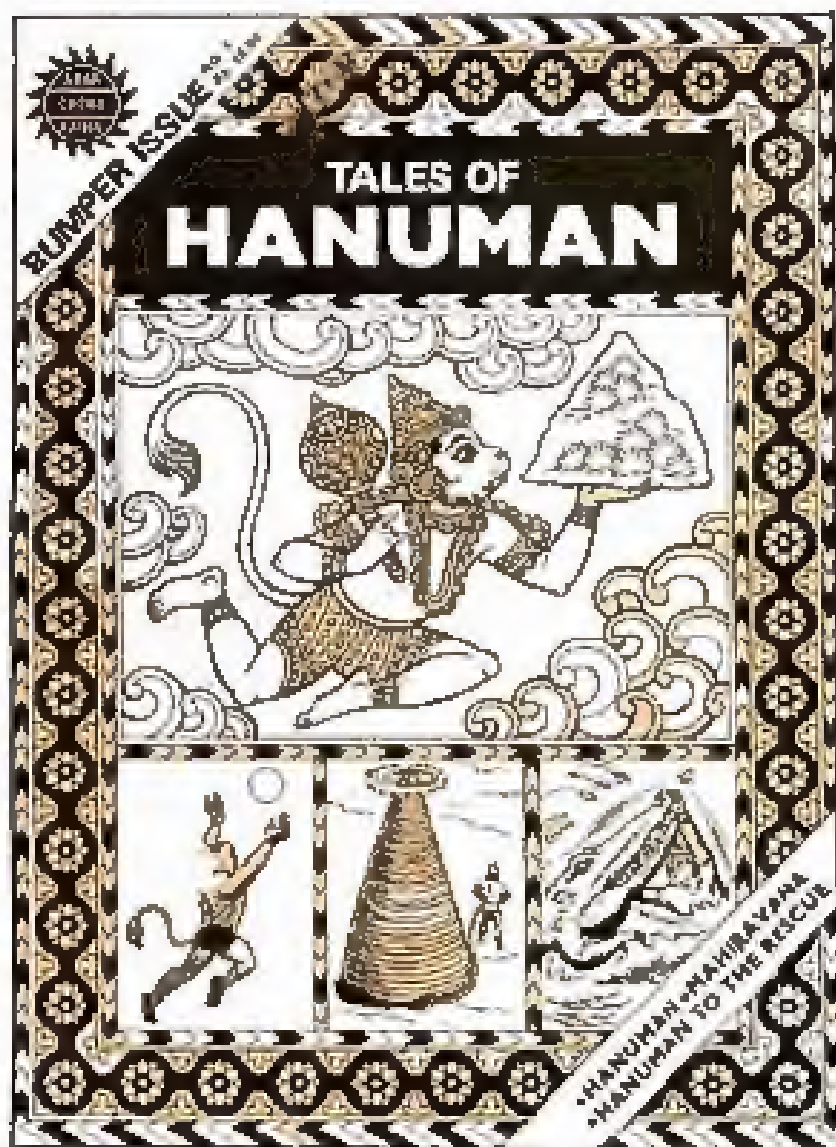
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